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Author's Note:

I've altered BloodClan a bit in this novel. I decided to make BloodClan an ancient clan that has been in the forest for many years until Scourge came and infested it with rogues and other fierce cats, thus making it even more vicious. Obviously this isn't a true replica to BloodClan in the books, so I ask you respect that. **The book is rated PG-13 for frequent dark, violent, and depressing scenes.**

CATS:

(Only the ones mentioned in the book)

BLOODCLAN:

Leader- Shadowstar: black tabby tom

Deputy- Whiteclaw- white tabby tom with green eyes. Mate: Snowfeather

Medicine Cat- Hawkfur-brown tabby tom with blue eyes

~Apprentice- Tinypaw: tiny gray tabby she-cat

Warriors:

Featherlily- white she-cat

Redpool-ginger tom. Mate: Briarstorm.

Briarstorm- black she-cat. Covered in scars. Mate: Redpool

Apprentices:

Lightpaw: light ginger she-cat

Hailpaw: white tom

Rainpaw: white and gray tabby tom

Queens:

Snowfeather- beautiful white she-cat with bright blue eyes. Mate: Whiteclaw. Mother to Icekit, Flightkit, and Snowkit

Heatherwing: Scarred brown tabby she-cat. Mate: ? Mother to Poppykit and Strikekit

Kits:

Poppykit: brown tabby she-cat

Strikekit: black and white tom

Snowkit: small white she-cat with bright blue eyes

Icekit: white she-cat with blue eyes

Flightkit: large white tom with green eyes

Elders:

None Mentioned

CATS OUTSIDE THE CLANS:

Oceankit: gray tabby she-cat

Wavekit: gray tabby she-cat

Bear- brown tom

STARCLAN/DARK FOREST CATS:

Stonecloud- white she-cat with green eyes

Silverwhisker- gray tabby she-cat

Lightningstar- ginger tabby tom

Pouncestar- gray tabby she-cat

Prologue

StarClan had remained calm for many moons, experiencing only positive news and outcomes, avoiding as much trouble as possible. The clans-SnowClan and FoxClan-had done well with following StarClan's path.

Little did they know about BloodClan. The clan far into the mountains, concealed by the vast and lucious trees. No cat was seen coming in or out of the forest. If a cat was seen, it was very rare. The clan was well hidden. Not many knew of their existence.

BloodClan wasn't the nicest clan around. For ages they had been a secretive yet fierce clan. They would stop any animal in its footsteps receiving large amounts of prey. There was nothing against killing in their warrior code. They were known as the fiercest cats of the forest. Then, Moonkit was born. The silver-blue she-cat had changed the definition of fierce. It wouldn't happen yet, but Moonkit would soon start her own clan. It would be more skilled than SnowClan. It would have better survival instincts than FoxClan. It would have more cats than SnowClan and FoxClan combined. It would replace BloodClan. BloodClan would lose its name as the fiercest clan in the forest.

If BloodClan cats transferred over to Moonkit's future clan, terror would be brought to the forest. Destruction, harm, agony would flood over the forest. SnowClan and FoxClan would lose, causing StarClan to fall to the Dark Forest. No cat was safe.

Stonecloud nervously walked through StarClan as she thought of what would happen if StarClan fell. It couldn't fall. StarClan was her home. She had to protect her surviving kin that strived in SnowClan and FoxClan.

Stonecloud was trying to seek out a dead leader from BloodClan. Most had ended in the Dark Forest. That's how most BloodClan cats spent their days after death. Some, however, acted and treated each other like normal clan cats. Their reward was StarClan.

Stonecloud had tried to seek one out for days, only resulting in failure. She couldn't discuss the prophecy with a Dark Forest cat. That would be a horrible idea. It was only when she had awoken that she had found Berrystar.

Berrystar was one of the ancient BloodClan leaders. She didn't believe in killing or taking over the forest. She wanted BloodClan to be a normal clan like the rest. She had lost to the rest of her clan members. Her clan members wanted to kill and listen to the cries of dying cats. Berrystar had defended herself, but lost everything to BloodClan. Her leadership, her family, her life.

Stonecloud walked through the forest, seeking the cream colored she-cat. Stonecloud stopped, spotting her by some rocks. She was looking into the stars.

"Berrystar," Stonecloud said, padding forward.

The cream she-cat turned around and let out a gentle smile. "Stonecloud, it's good to see you."

"I came to discuss the prophecy," Stonecloud said. "I couldn't find any other BloodClan leaders who had gone to StarClan."

"You wouldn't have," Berrystar said. "I'm the only one who made it to StarClan. The first and the only."

"What a shame," Stonecloud said.

"I tried to change them," Berrystar sighed.

"You tried your best," Stonecloud said.

Berrystar shook her head. She climbed onto a nearby rock, standing on it as the wind flew by her pelt, creating a breeze that chilled Stonecloud's pelt.

"The Dark Forest is rising," Berrystar proclaimed. "I can feel it. A fight is coming."

"Of course," Stonecloud said. "Moonkit will rise."

Berrystar shook her head. "You don't get it, do you? Moonkit won't rise just once. Maybe she'll die. Even if that happens, she still can take control of StarClan."

"What are you saying?" Stonecloud asked.

"Have sense, Stonecloud. Moonkit will rise again and again and again until someone stops her," Berrystar said.

"StarClan will stop her," Stonecloud growled. Anger spiked through her pelt. She would defend StarClan at all costs. She had to keep everyone safe.

"Maybe," Berrystar said. "Maybe not. If the army gets big enough, we're all in trouble." Stonecloud didn't reply. She was getting annoyed with the ancient she-cat.

Berrystar continued to look at the sky. "My time to fade away is near. I know it is. Most cats have forgotten about my existence. You bought me only a little more time here," she said to Stonecloud. "Soon, I won't be here to help BloodClan anymore. Only the Dark Forest will be able to aid my clan. Everything will go wrong."

"I'm sorry," Stonecloud said. "We should probably discuss the prophecy now."

"I'll listen," Berrystar said. "I don't know how much help I'll be. What is the prophecy?"

Stonecloud sighed. "The moon's shine will spread to the land of blood, enclosing the royals in its grasp. The land of blood will be outraged, crying for their leaders. None of the royals will be able to free from its shine, except one. The one of snow will be abandoned. Darkness and depression will fill her soul, but the shine will miss her, saving her from even more darkness."

"What does this mean?" Berrystar asked. "It's a long prophecy. I don't see how it will help the cause."

"There is already another prophecy about the problem. This one is directed to BloodClan. I think Shadowstar is going to die soon. Whiteclaw is the deputy."

"What does this have to do with anything?" Berrystar hissed. "Snowfeather is his mate and," she stopped. "Snowfeather will be abandoned?"

Stonecloud shook her head. "No, Berrystar. Snowfeather has given birth to three kits. One is named Snowkit. I think Snowkit will be abandoned. Whiteclaw will become leader. I think that his family will fall into Moonkit's paws. All of his family except...Snowkit."

"Snowkit will be saved," Berrystar said. "It is a blessing."

"And a curse," Stonecloud said. "She'll live a life of sadness, but it will save her life in return. She'll never experience the darkness that her family will experience."

"Yes," Berrystar said. "That is what the prophecy means." She stood up, beginning to walk away from Stonecloud.

"Where are you going?" Stonecloud asked, reaching forward to the she-cat.

"I told you. My time is near, Stonecloud. You have bought me just enough time. I'm going now to fade away with the rest of the cats. I trust you to help my clan, Stonecloud," Berrystar said, her silhouette beginning to fade with the rest of the forest.

"Wait! Berrystar!" Stonecloud called.

"I trust you," her words echoed the forest.

Stonecloud sat in the forest, alone. "What have I gotten myself into?" she muttered.

Chapter 1

"I want to rule BloodClan!" The yowl of her sister made Snowkit awake. Snowkit yawned, seeing her sister, Icekit, argue with her brother, Flightkit. The two seemed to fight a lot during their games while Snowkit preferred to stand to the side, watching.

Snowkit was named after her mother, Snowfeather. Snowfeather was one of the kindest and sweetest cats Snowkit knew. Her mother was kind, caring, and loving. She was different than every other BloodClan cat. Most of the BloodClan cats were fierce, but her mother had softer heart.

As for Snowkit's siblings, they acted more like her father, Whiteclaw. Whiteclaw was the deputy of BloodClan. To be deputy, you had to kill several cats and make your clanmates scared of you. Whiteclaw would be leader very soon since Shadowstar was on his last life.

"No, I want to rule BloodClan!" Flightkit hissed, his white pelt standing out in the darkened den. Flightkit looked up, his green eyes flashing at Icekit's blue eyes.

Snowkit gasped as a flash of white came by. Icekit had pinned Flightkit to the ground and had begun to yowl at her brother.

Snowkit began to feel cold again when her mother stood up. "Flightkit, Icekit," Snowfeather snapped. "None of you can rule BloodClan in your game. Pick different names."

"But," Flightkit whined.

Snowfeather shook her head. She padded back to the nest, keeping Snowkit warm again. Snowfeather turned to Snowkit, her blue eyes staring deep into Snowkit's blue eyes. "Why don't you play with your siblings?"

"I don't feel like it," Snowkit said. It was that, but she also felt like she didn't deserve to play with them. They were tough cats. Surely they would win any game she played with them. They would grow up to be big, strong leaders while Snowkit, the runt of the litter, would most likely be downsized to a nursery queen like her mother.

Snowkit looked up at her mother. "How did you react when you were forced to stay a nursery queen all your life until you became an elder?"

Snowfeather looked at Snowkit. "Well, I wasn't too happy about it. I thought it was an unfair punishment. But, I knew that if I reacted too much, I would be exiled. BloodClan really didn't need me."

"But you're a great warrior!" Snowkit said. "I heard Daddy tell Icekit and Flightkit all about when you two were apprentices. He said you were the best!"

"For my final assessment, I was supposed to kill a rogue that had ended up on our territory. I wouldn't do it. I couldn't do it. No cat deserves to die like that. So, Whiteclaw killed it instead," Snowfeather said.

Snowkit sighed. Her clan was bloodthirsty, always looking for a fight. Snowkit wanted to be just like her mother when she grew up. Snowkit wouldn't kill a cat...ever. She wasn't like her father and siblings. She barely even felt like they were family. The only cat she truly loved and adored was her mother. The rest of her family were strangers to her.

Snowkit's ears pricked as her father walked into the den. "Where are my lovely kits?!" he yowled.

Icekit and Flightkit bursted to their father who also had the same pelt color as them. "Here we are, Daddy!"

"There are my kits! How old are you today?" he asked. Snowkit sighed. Her father hadn't even noticed her. Sometimes it felt like she wasn't even his kit.

"Three moons!" Flightkit yowled.

"Hey, I was going to say that," Icekit growled, pushing her brother over.

While the two siblings fought, Whiteclaw padded over to Snowfeather. "How is my lovely mate?"

"I'm fine," Snowfeather said. "Did you know that Snowkit was here too?"

Whiteclaw looked down, finally noticing his third kit. "Oh, Snowkit! I could barely see you. You were hiding in your mother's fur," he laughed, poking Snowkit with his tail.

Snowkit let out a little laugh.

"Can I talk to you for a second, Snowfeather?" Whiteclaw asked.

"Sure," Snowfeather said, padding out of the den with her mate.

Right when they walked out, Snowkit's siblings turned to her. "Why don't you play with us, Snowkit?" Flightkit asked.

"I-I don't really feel like it. I'm really tired," Snowkit said.

" 'I'm really tired'," Icekit said in a taunting voice.

"Snowkit's too much of a wimp," Flightkit said. "Shadowstar better just exile her now."

Snowkit growled as anger spiked through her pelt. "I'M NOT A WIMP!" she hissed.

"Then prove it," Icekit hissed. Icekit and Flightkit exchanged glances, quickly leaping onto Snowkit and knocking her down.

Snowkit screeched as her siblings tugged at her fur and clawed her pelt. Another nursery queen, Heatherwing, just laughed.

Heatherwing was a brown tabby she-cat, covered in scars. She was another tough cat. Her kits, Poppykit and Strikekit, were almost six moons.

"MOMMY!" Snowkit screeched. She yowled as she felt Flightkit pluck some fur from her tail.

"KITS!" Snowfeather hissed, running into the nursery den. She scooted Flightkit and Icekit aside, picking Snowkit up by the scruff. Several tuffs of Snowkit's fur were missing, due to the violent actions of her siblings.

"You do not treat your sister that way," Snowfeather growled.

"We were just having fun," Flightkit lied.

"You always treat her like she's your favorite," Icekit murmured.

"What, Icekit?"

"Nothing," Icekit replied.

Whiteclaw had gone, taking Snowkit's siblings with him. They were going to go around the territory for fun. Snowkit was stuck in the nursery with Snowfeather once again. She would always be stuck in the nursery.

"Why do they hate me?" Snowkit whimpered.

"They don't hate you," Snowfeather said, stroking Snowkit with her tail.

Snowkit pushed her mother's tail away. "Yes, they do. I see it when they look at me. They attacked me today. They hate me so much."

Snowfeather sighed, putting her tail down. "I don't know why they hate you, Snowkit. You are a lovely she-cat who will grow into a lovely warrior. Your siblings don't see it," she paused and then whispered, "Your father doesn't see it either."

"That too!" Snowkit said. "Daddy doesn't even know I exist."

"Of course he knows you exist, Snowkit. It's just...he takes more pride in Flightkit and Icekit than you because they're tough," Snowfeather said.

"So I just need to be tough to fit in?! That's all?!" Snowkit asked.

"Darling, you don't need to be tough. If you would rather act like your normal self, I'm sure the clan could find something for you," Snowfeather said.

"So I could be stuck as a pathetic nursery queen like you?" Snowkit groaned. She gasped, realizing what she just said.

Snowfeather looked into her kit's eyes, shocked and hurt by her kit's words. Snowfeather got up and exited the den, leaving Snowkit behind with Heatherwing and her two kits.

"Ah, who cares about her," Heatherwing groaned. "She's too emotional. Forget about your mother. One day, you'll be a strong warrior."

Snowkit didn't reply, quickly following after her mother. She gasped to see Shadowstar standing on the fallen tree where he made announcements. Lightpaw, Hailpaw, and Rainpaw stood with him.

"Lightpaw, Hailpaw, and Rainpaw are ready to become warriors, but first they must prove their strength by killing the rogue we have captured!" the old black tom hissed.

Yowls of triumph came from the crowd. Snowkit scooted around her clanmates, frantically trying to find her mother.

Snowkit looked up to see Whiteclaw and Featherlily scooting a small ginger tom over by the fallen tree. The tom looked like he was about fifteen moons, but he was fairly small, probably the runt of his litter. "Just like me," Snowkit whispered.

"Please, don't kill me," the tom cried. "I'll do anything!"

Shadowstar laughed. "You shouldn't have stumbled into our territory. Lightpaw, Hailpaw, and Rainpaw, when I say 'attack', you may begin."

The three siblings nodded, ready to kill the tom.

"ATTACK!" Shadowstar hissed.

The ginger tom winced as the three leapt on him. Yowls and hisses came as fur flew into the air. Snowkit winced as she heard the tom scream. As Snowkit came closer, she saw Rainpaw bite the tom's throat, killing him immediately. Snowkit gasped as the dead tom fell at her paws. His ginger fur was stained with blood, his throat was a bloody mess, and his eyes...his unseeing green eyes stared longingly at Snowkit as if he was asking why she didn't save him.

Snowkit let out a screech. "MOMMY!"

Gasps came from the crowd. Snowfeather quickly picked up her kit. "Snowfeather! You know that kits are not supposed to witness this event until they are an apprentice!"

"I'm sorry, Shadowstar. It won't happen again. I promise," Snowfeather said.

Shadowstar dipped his head as Snowfeather ran back into the nursery with her kit. Icekit and Flightkit sat, looking wide-eyed at Snowkit.

"You got to see the ceremony?!" Flightkit gasped.

"You're so lucky! I've been wanting to witness that for moons!" Icekit said.

"Hush, kits," Snowfeather said. "Get some sleep."

Snowkit finally let the tears slip down her face. "I'm sorry I said that stuff to you, Mommy. I was trying to find you to say sorry and then that tom...he died. It's my fault. I-I should've saved that tom."

"No, Snowkit, it's not your fault that tom died. BloodClan has nasty ways of showing how to be a warrior. You're a kit, Snowkit. There wasn't anything you could do to save him," Snowfeather said.

As Snowkit curled up next to her mother, Heatherwing's words echoed in her ears. Be tough. Snowkit shook her head. No, she would be a nursery queen. She would never kill a cat. She couldn't kill a cat. She finally understood what her mother meant now. After witnessing a kill, Snowkit would never be the same.

Chapter 2

Heatherwing had left the nursery since Poppykit and Strikekit had become apprentices. Snowkit was relieved. The she-cat had been mean and rude the whole time Snowkit had known her.

As for her, Snowkit hadn't recovered from seeing the ginger tom die. She relived it every night, seeing the tom die again and again. Every time she tried to move her legs to save him, they were stuck, so she couldn't help the tom.

Snowfeather had to comfort her kit each night, telling her it was just a dream and that she was alright. But Snowkit wasn't alright anymore. She was scarred. Who knew how long the dreams would last? They had lasted a moon and a half. How much longer would they last?

Snowkit groaned as she opened her eyes. The sunlight lit up the den. Flightkit and Icekit were already gone, probably with Whiteclaw. Whiteclaw loved the two very much, not caring about Snowkit at all.

"Good morning," Snowfeather said.

"Morning," Snowkit grumbled.

Snowkit sighed as she stretched. It had been another night of non-stop nightmares. This time the ginger tom had a name. His name had been Flick in the dream, yet Snowkit doubted it was his real name.

"I couldn't help him," Snowkit whispered.

"Are you still thinking about the ceremony?" Snowfeather asked. "You're four and a half moons, Snowkit. Try to forget."

"I can't forget, Mommy." Snowkit began to pace around the empty nursery. "Everytime I try to, it just comes back. It's stuck in my head

forever."

"Sweetie, you need to forget. It's driving you insane. I don't want to see my little kit go insane," Snowfeather laughed.

Snowkit laughed too, rubbing her pelt against her mother's. Snowkit looked up as Briarstorm walked into the nursery.

She was another tough she-cat, one of the strongest in the clan. Her mate was Redpool, Shadowstar's son. Shadowstar only had one son, so he favored Redpool above all warriors. Redpool was only a kit when Shadowstar assigned a new deputy, so he was forced to assign Whiteclaw. If Whiteclaw had died now, Shadowstar would surely assign Redpool as the deputy.

"Can I help you with something, Briarstorm?" Snowfeather asked.

Briarstorm growled. She turned to face Snowfeather, revealing the pale scars that stood out against her black pelt.

"Yes, stupid she-cat," Briarstorm hissed. "I'm expecting Redpool's kits which means I'll be in the nursery now. I'll be moving in the nursery in a few sunrises. I want my nest properly made. No soggy nests! I want my kits to have the best!"

Snowfeather was about to speak when Snowkit stood up. "Don't talk to my Mommy that way!"

"Snowkit," Snowfeather said, pushing her daughter aside. "Of course, Briarstorm. I'll have your nest ready by then. Is there anything else you need?"

Briarstorm growled. "Make that pathetic kit of yours shut up."

"I'm terribly sorry," Snowfeather said as Briarstorm exited the den.

Snowfeather turned to Snowkit. Snowkit shrunk down, trying not to make eye contact with her mother.

"Snowkit, don't talk to the warriors that way! They could easily just exile you right now. I don't want to see you all alone in the woods," Snowfeather said. "I don't like being talked to that way, but if I do

protest, they'll exile me too. I'll have to leave the clan."

"Leave the clan? That's harsh," Snowkit said.

"BloodClan is harsh. Please, keep your mouth shut from now on. Briarstorm will be moving in the nursery in a few sunrises. We have to be kind to her," Snowfeather said.

"Fine," Snowkit groaned.

Snowfeather left the den to retrieve some moss for Briarstorm's nest. It would take a few days to make the nest perfect, so Snowfeather had to get started immediately.

In the meantime, Snowkit sat in her mother's nest, bored out of her mind. What would she do? She couldn't leave the nursery. She would be punished, plus, she didn't want to see a cat murdered again.

Snowkit crumbled some of Flightkit's nest into a ball. Snowkit bounced it at the wall, causing it to return to Snowkit.

Snowkit smiled, continually throwing it at the wall, letting it return to her. Snowkit picked up the moss ball in her mouth and set it down, taking a small rest before throwing again.

Snowkit grabbed the moss again, about to throw it, when her siblings walked into the nursery.

"My nest!" Flightkit hissed.

Snowkit dropped the moss ball. "I was bored and--." She didn't have time to finish when Flightkit knocked the moss out of her mouth.

"This is from my nest! I get your nest!" he hissed.

"I don't have a nest!" Snowkit growled. "You two took mine apart a few sunrises ago and added it to your own."

"Then go find moss," Icekit hissed.

"No, Icekit. You're not the boss of me," Snowkit hissed. "Take this!"

She threw the moss ball at Icekit.

Icekit screeched as it hit her face.

"Leave her alone!" Flightkit hissed. "We aren't afraid to attack you again!"

Snowkit gasped as Whiteclaw entered the den. "Snowkit, why don't we go on a walk? Just you and me."

Snowkit turned to her siblings. They had angry expressions on their faces. It probably wasn't a good idea to stay.

"Sure," Snowkit mumbled, following after her father.

"You need to stop stealing your siblings' moss," Whiteclaw explained.

"I'm not stealing it, Daddy. They are stealing it from me," Snowkit said.

"I'm taking you into the forest to collect that extra moss for Flightkit's nest. Do you understand?" Whiteclaw growled.

"Yes," Snowkit mewed quietly.

Her father led her into the forest. Snowkit quickly realized she had never been in the forest before. This was the first time she had ever set foot outside camp.

"Wow! The forest is huge!"

"Get the moss!" Whiteclaw hissed, not caring about his daughter's first visit to the forest.

Snowkit sadly padded away. Her father didn't care about her at all. He just cared about Flightkit and Icekit.

Snowkit continued padding through the forest, her father no longer behind her. Snowkit shrugged and began to retrieve some moss nearby. Snowkit felt the moss. It was very damp and wet. Snowkit let out a smile. Flightkit deserved this kind of moss. Ripping a

piece, Snowkit grabbed the moss in her mouth.

She glanced around, noticing no cat. "Whiteclaw?"

Her father didn't show himself at all. Snowkit screeched as a large yowl came from the bush. Whiteclaw leapt out, knocking Snowkit over.

"What was that for?!" Snowkit asked.

"You always need to be prepared if a cat attacks you," he said. Whiteclaw suddenly noticed the moss. He put his paw down, feeling it. "YOU'RE GOING TO GIVE YOUR BROTHER THIS MOSS?!"

"Well, I--," she was cut off as Snowfeather spoke.

"Snowkit? Whiteclaw? What are you doing in the forest?" Snowfeather asked, coming out of a bush. She was holding a large amount of moss for Briarstorm's nest.

"Snowkit stole moss from Flightkit's nest. I was taking her into the forest to get more, but she refuses to give her brother good moss," Whiteclaw proclaimed.

"That's because it's her moss that she stole back," Snowfeather said. "Honestly Whiteclaw, don't you have patrols to do? I'll take Snowkit back."

"Alright. Good-bye. Love you," Whiteclaw said.

"I love you too," Snowfeather said. She turned to Snowkit. "What did you do?"

"I was bored, so I took some of Flightkit's nest and made it into a ball, so I could throw it at the den. Then they yelled at me. I threw the moss at Icekit and Whiteclaw took me into the woods..."

Snowfeather sighed. "Will you please stop getting into fights with your siblings?"

"They fight every day, Mommy! You do nothing to stop them!" Snowkit complained.

"I don't stop them because they'll be tough warriors. As for you, Snowkit, the clan is annoyed with you. I don't want to see you getting exiled for a stupid reason. Please, Snowkit. I just ask for you to behave. That's all I want. Promise me you will?"

Snowkit sighed. "I promise."

Snowfeather smiled. "That's a good girl. Climb onto my back. I'll walk you home."

Snowkit smiled. She climbed onto her mother's back, feeling indulged by her mother's soft, thick white fur. She smiled as she rode back to camp. She didn't know why she was smiling though.

Chapter 3

A half moon had passed for Snowkit. Her nightmares had faded, but the image of the ginger tom in her mind would stay there forever, always a memory.

Icekit and Flightkit were overjoyed that it would be a moon before they became apprentices, but Snowkit wasn't so happy. She knew she wouldn't succeed on her training. She'd probably have to fix all the other apprentices' nests each day. She would most likely be the one gathering moss for the elders and picking ticks off. She'd be the slave.

As for other news, Briarstorm had given birth to five kits. A very large litter. Redpool and Shadowstar were very pleased with the number of kits. There were three she-cats and two toms. Each acted fiercely, just as Flightkit and Icekit did.

The largest one was Robinkit. She was a ginger she-cat who resembed Redpool. Her eyes were a deep amber, and she was one of the fiercest of the litter. Pollenkit was a light ginger tom who also took after his father. He wasn't as fierce as the others. In fact, he was the runt, but he didn't show it all. Featherkit was a white and black she-cat. She was no doubt her mother's favorite. Brighkit was a light gray tabby she-cat. She was the least fierce out of her sisters, but she was much fiercer and wilder than Pollenkit. The last kit was Darkkit. He was a pure black tom with bright green eyes. He was right alongside with Robinkit as the fiercest.

Flightkit and Icekit enjoyed playing with the five kits while Snowkit stayed aside, trying not to make eye contact with any kit.

She remembered the day that Pollenkit had accidently stumbled onto her. Snowkit was curled up in her mother's tail, when she heard a yowl nearby. Opening her eyes, Pollenkit had gasped, seeing the bright blue eyes standing out of the white fur. He asked who she was and Snowkit had tilted her head. She had explained she was Flightkit and Icekit's sister, Snowkit. Apparently

Briarstorm's kits had no other knowledge of her. They had thought that Flightkit and Icekit were the only other kits in the nursery.

Pollenkit had been kind, apologizing, but his mother quickly made lectured him, telling him that Snowkit was a mere runt, destined to be a nursery queen. That was the closest Snowkit had ever felt to someone. Sure, Pollenkit wasn't a friend. He was more fierce now, not even paying attention to Snowkit, but it had been the first time that Snowkit had been apologized to. That had made her day.

When Snowkit awoke to see the storm clouds lining up the sky, she knew it was going to be a bad day. She was correct as she saw her siblings whispering with Briarstorm's kits. She pricked her ears, hearing her name.

Snowkit groaned as Featherkit, Brightkit, and Robinkit walked over towards her. "Come play with us," Featherkit said, gesturing her black and white tail over to the other kits.

"I'm fine here," Snowkit said.

With an evil smile, Brightkit pushed Snowkit off of her mother's nest, almost dragging her to the other cats.

"Let me go!" Snowkit mewed. She was bigger than Brightkit, but there was no way that she was stronger.

"Icekit, Flightkit!" Snowkit mewed, hoping her siblings would help. But her siblings just laughed as she was dragged to the group of cats.

"We're going to play a game," Pollenkit hissed. The kit had changed ever since the day he had stumbled upon Snowkit.

"What kind of game?" Robinkit asked.

"A deadly game!" Darkkit growled.

Snowkit looked around for her mother, quickly forgetting her mother had been collecting moss for Briarstorm. Snowkit then looked around for Briarstorm. She spotted her, napping in her nest,

unaware of what her kits did.

"I like deadly games," Flightkit growled. "What will we play?"

"We all go into the forest," Icekit said. "Once we get scared, we come back to camp. Last one back wins."

The other kits mewed in agreement while Snowkit shuffled her paws. "That's dangerous..."

"Have some adventure!" Robinkit hissed. "You're coming whether you like it or not, wimp."

Snowkit shrunk down as the large ginger she-cat towered over her. "Okay," she mewed, scared of what would happen.

"We sneak out now," Darkkit growled. "One at a time."

"You first, wimp," Featherkit hissed, pushing Snowkit forward.

"No, that's okay," Snowkit said, trying to allow one of the other kits to go first, but she was pushed away.

Snowkit stood in the middle of camp while the other kits looked at her, edging her on. Snowkit sighed. She wouldn't get out of this mess. Snowkit knew that no cat would care if she went into the woods, so without any hesitation, she padded in.

As she entered, she immediately began to feel lonely. The wind ruffled her white pelt, coating leaves in her fur. It was the beginning of leaf-fall now. Soon, leaf-bare would arrive, and the prey would be scarce.

Snowkit nervously padded through the forest, hoping no cat could see her. The sun was nowhere to be found in the sky, leaving Snowkit in the darkened forest.

She quietly padded through the forest, hoping she would find her mother. Snowkit quickly shook the thought away. No, she had to pretend to be brave out here. She had to prove to the other

cats that she was as fierce as them.

Snowkit jumped at the sound of a squirrel scampering up a tree. Snowkit stopped, relieved it was only a squirrel. She continued walking through the woods.

Then the thought hit her. What if she found a place where moss grew and took a nap? Surely she would be the last out. Once she awoke, she could return to camp after everyone else, claiming herself the victor of the game.

With the idea in her mind, Snowkit padded around, looking for a nice place with moss. She sniffed the air, scenting no other cats. Snowkit looked around, but saw no moss. Where was it all? Near the pond?

Snowkit decided to try to find a pond, so she could get some moss and rest. Frantically looking around, Snowkit stumbed onto the pond.

"There we go," she whispered, pushing the water plants away, trying to find the moss.

The plants were tall and endless though. Snowkit had to keep pushing through. She could hear the sound of water, but she couldn't see it.

"Where is the water?!" she growled. She kept pushing through the plants. Faster and faster without any hesitation. She screeched as she fell into the icy pool of water.

The pond was deep, not letting Snowkit touch her paws to the ground. "HELP!" Snowkit screeched. She flailed her paws, trying to swim, but was unable to. She had never learned how to swim.

"HELP!" she screeched, accidentally inhaling water. Snowkit coughed, falling under the surface. Was this the end?

Snowkit was beginning to lose consciousness. "Good-bye, Mommy," she thought in her head.

She gasped as suddenly she was hauled out of the water.

She coughed, spitting out water frantically. Her pelt was soaking wet and now she was lying on dry land. She looked around. Who was the cat who had saved her. She gasped, seeing two ginger paws grabbing onto the side of the pond. It was Redpool!

"Hang on, Redpool!" Snowkit said, trying to heave the ginger tom up. She knew that most cats in BloodClan couldn't swim, Redpool being one of them.

The ginger tom looked at her with pleading eyes, just like the rogue had done. Snowkit grabbed his paws, but hers were small and weak. There was no way she would be able to lift the tom out of the pond.

His paws were losing grip. "Hang on!" Snowkit called. But the tom shook his head and let go, falling into the darkened pond. "REDPOOL!" Snowkit screeched.

Suddenly another cat came by. It was Featherlily. "Snowkit? What are you doing out here? Where's Redpool?"

Snowkit shivered, pointing to the pond. Featherlily gasped, jumping into the pond. Snowkit was nervous, not knowing if Featherlily could swim either. But Featherwing emerged with Redpool.

She coughed, dropping him next to Snowkit. "Redpool," she said, shaking the tom. The tom did not wake or speak. Nothing echoed from his mouth. Featherlily looked down. The tom was dead.

Snowkit groaned. She had killed another cat. Well she hadn't killed him, she was just unable to save him.

"Snowkit!" a familiar voice came. Snowkit looked up to see her mother running towards her.

"What happened?" Snowfeather asked Snowkit.

"I-I fell into the pond and Redpool saved me, but I couldn't save him," Snowkit sighed.

"Why were you in the forest?!"

"It's a long story," Snowkit said.

Snowfeather sighed, looking at the dead tom. "Shadowstar will not be happy."

Featherlily nodded. Snowfeather sighed, letting Snowkit climb onto her pelt. Snowkit began to dry off as she snuggled into her mother's fur.

Featherlily retrieved the body while Snowfeather padded back to camp. Snowkit nervously awaited what would happen. Briarstorm and Shadowstar would be heartbroken. What would Redpool's kits think? *It's all my fault,* Snowkit thought.

As Featherlily and the rest of the patrol arrived in camp, cats gasped, seeing the body of Redpool.

"What is it?!" Shadowstar yowled, edging through the crowd. He stopped, seeing his dead son. "REDPOOL!" he screeched in pain, running to his son.

Briarstorm edged out of her den, seeing the dead body. "NO!" She began to cry, pushing her face into the tom's fur. Her kits edged out of the den. At the sight of seeing their dead father, they sprang to him, yowling.

So Snowkit was the last back. She wasn't happy about it though. She had cost Redpool his life.

Snowfeather quickly shoved Snowkit into the nursery, telling her to remain there and that she would be asked questions later.

Hours passed. No one entered the nursery. She had heard Shadowstar call a clan meeting, but she couldn't hear what he saying. Something about an exile. Snowkit wondered whose it was. She had heard her parents, mostly her mother, protesting about something as well.

When her mother did re-enter the den, her face was

sickened with worry and shock. She went straight to bed, not asking Snowkit any questions.

Snowkit was about to question why, but she decided it was best not to. She had a tough day and didn't feel like getting into any more trouble.

Snowkit closed her eyes and slept. She had nightmares. She saw the rogue die again and she mostly saw Redpool die. She groaned in her sleep, trying to save the both, but was unable.

Snowkit awoke, gasping that she was no longer in the nursery, but on her mother's back, in the woods at night.

"Mommy? What's going on?" Snowkit asked, almost falling off her mother's back.

"We're just walking, Snowkit. We're almost here," Snowfeather said.

"Almost where, Mommy?" Snowkit asked, unaware of what her mother was doing. Snowkit sniffed the air. "This isn't our territory."

"Hush, Snowkit." Snowfeath set her kit down on a soft piece of moss. "Sleep, darling. I'll be here in the morning."

"But why are we here?" Snowkit asked.

"Just sleep," Snowfeather said, lightly stroking her tail across Snowkit's pelt.

Snowkit yawned, realizing how tired she was. Her mother began to hum, soothing Snowkit. Snowkit shut her eyes, falling asleep.

Chapter 4

Snowkit shivered, wind ruffling through her pelt. Usually her mother kept her warm, but she felt more cold than ever, especially in the blazing wind. Snowkit yawned, wondering why the nursery was so cold.

When she opened her eyes, she gasped, realizing she wasn't in the nursery any longer. She had thought that the trip to the forest had only been a dream, but she was wrong. She was alone in the woods. She slept on the solid ground, her moss flown off of her body since the wind refused to stop.

Her mother. She had promised to return, hadn't she? Snowkit looked around, sniffing the air. The wind had taken most of the scent away. The little scent of her mother that she could pick up was stale. Where had her mother gone?

Snowkit paced around. She didn't recognize these woods at all. None of the scents were familiar. They all lacked the familiar BloodClan scent. She knew she wasn't in BloodClan territory, but she had no idea how to return to BloodClan either.

"MOMMY!" she yowled through the howling wind. "MOMMY, WHERE ARE YOU?!"

Snowkit frantically ran through trees, looking for her mother. Where had her mother gone?

Faster and faster. Her pace began to quicken. She raced through the forest, frantically looking for her lost mother. Snowkit ran, but soon halted as she edged near a cliff. There were no cliffs near BloodClan. She was in an entirely different forest!

Snowkit backed away from the cliff, scared. Where was she? How could she return? "HELLO?!" she yowled, knowing that no one would answer.

She was correct. Not a sound came. Only the wind whistled through her ears. Snowkit shivered, looking frantically for a place to cover from the wind. She paced around, going to each tree she could find, none displaying any signs of shelter.

Tired and lonely, Snowkit groaned, now just walking slowly through the forest. She looked down at the ground, seeing no pawsteps whatsoever. Abandoned. She was abandoned.

Why hadn't her mother returned? Was her mother dead? Surely a BloodClan warrior would notice and come finding her.

"I'll just wait here," Snowkit said, sitting on a rock. "They'll come looking for me. I know they will."

Snowkit sat on the rock, knowing it would take a while. But the morning sun was already rising to the middle of the sky. Surely they would have known by now.

Sighing, Snowkit curled up on the rock, shovering her tail over her nose, trying to protect herself from the cold breeze. Showering her eyes from the rushing wind, Snowkit somehow slept.

Snowkit opened her eyes. Her stomach was growling loudly. She had only realized how hungry she was by now. Snowkit looked around, seeing that it was nearly late afternoon now and no cat had come and found her.

"I have to keep waiting here," Snowkit said, not wanting to leave her rock. She sighed as her stomach growled again. She could wait there all day, but her stomach couldn't. She had to find some food and water.

Snowkit padded around the forest floor, ducking as bird flew by, stopping as a sound came. She was scared, lonely, abandoned. Her stomach groaned once more. She was starving. She had gone almost a day without food. She realized she had gone to bed without dinner and this was the price she paid.

The wind had died down, flowing in a gentle breeze. She no longer shivered in her own pelt, despite the continuous wind. She

sniffed the ground, hoping she would find some type of food.

Snowkit gasped, seeing large paw prints in the dust. These were no cat pawprints. These prints belonged to a much bigger animal. Much bigger.

Snowkit began to follow the tracks, hoping they would lead to someone who could help her, or maybe even some food. She followed them constantly, stopping every once in awhile to make sure she was still following. She sniffed the air, smelling some type of animal.

Crouching down, Snowkit edged forward, seeing a large object ahead of her. But as Snowkit neared, she noticed no large animal. She noticed a dead animal. This animal had been dead for about a day or so. What animal was it? It posessed a dark brown color, its paws replaced with hooves. Thin antlers stuck up from its head. "A deer?" Snowkit asked.

Its carcass was mostly gone, only a little bit of meat left on the old piece of prey. Snowkit was about to turn away, but her growling stomach reminded her of how hungry she was. Sighing, Snowkit turned to the meat. It looked disgusting and hard, but she was starving.

Snowkit bit into the meat that was left on the deer. The meat was hard and stale, filling Snowkit's mouth with a gross flavor, but it filled her belly. But she gobbled the rest up, her belly slightly filled. Snowkit groaned, still tasting the disgusting flavor in her mouth. She hoped another cat would find her soon.

Lacking water, Snowkit searched around for a pond. She stopped, thinking of the pond the other day. The one that had killed Redpool. Poor Briarstorm and the kits. It was entirely her fault. She should've stood up to the kits, refusing to play their dangerous game.

Snowkit sighed. There was no time to be sentimental. She had to find water. She searched around, but found none. Her mouth was dry from the deer, but she was tired. The sun had already begun to set due to the season of leaf-fall. She had to find a place to

sleep.

Snowkit padded around, looking for a nice dry spot to sleep. But there was none. She sighed, laying down between some tree roots that provided a comfortable spot to rest.

"Mommy, why aren't you here?" she whispered. She looked into the sky, almost seeing her mother in the stars. Her mother couldn't be dead. But if her mother wasn't dead, why did she leave Snowkit alone?

Chapter 5

A moon. That's how long Snowkit had been out in the woods, trying to survive. To be honest, she wasn't even exactly sure how she had survived.

"Blessings from StarClan," she whispered.

Those first weeks had been hard. As it was nearing leaf-bare, there wasn't much prey. She had eaten the remains of rotten prey, chewed on sour berries, and drank mucky water from the river nearby.

After about two weeks, she was hungry, thirsty, and tired, and on the verge of death. At one point she could barely move because she was horribly fatigued. She sat on her nest, waiting for death to come to her. She wasn't even going to bother to continue moving and continuing the search for food.

But then StarClan sent a miracle. As she was about to die, she had gasped, seeing a bright light ahead of her. She didn't know how she had done it, but she miraculously stood up, her legs wobbling. She moved slowly towards the light, wondering where it led to. Maybe her death. She continued to follow it, through some bushes and some trees. She walked at a very slow pace of course.

After entering another bush, the light vanished and Snowkit gasped, seeing a beautiful, clean river sparkling ahead. Three plump, dead rabbits layed on the ground before her, as if it was a gift from StarClan. Glancing around, Snowkit carefully made her way over to the rabbits, gobbling every single rabbit up and licking the bones clean of meat.

With a little strength in her, she made it to the river, drinking large amounts of water that kept her sustained. With a full belly and much water in her stomach, Snowkit had sat down and slept peacefully, surprisingly awakening the next morning.

So now Snowkit was here two weeks passed that incident, fully healthy again. The river provided much water. Plus, Snowkit had even caught a fish! Catching fish was easy for her. She could easily swipe her paw and scoop one up. She had been catching them for days, occasionally catching a mouse too.

Snowkit sat in the morning, eating her fish that she had freshly caught. She ate the fish fast, spitting the bones out. Tossing the remains of the fish aside, she stood up and stretched, letting out a mrrowl.

Snowkit stopped and pricked her ears. She had thought she had heard a noise nearby. But maybe it was just her imagination.

As she continued to pad around, gathering some food and moss, she heard the noise again. She was not imagining it. The sound became closer and Snowkit realized that it was the sound of cats-no, more like kits- talking.

Curious to find out what was happening, she dropped her food and moss, following the noise and scent of the two unknown kits. She came nearer and jumped into the bushes. She gasped, seeing two gray tabby she-cats, one with much darker fur and green eyes, the other with lighter fur and blue eyes.

They stopped near the bush. "What is that noise?" the one with the lighter fur asked.

The other kit shrugged. "Probably a squirrel," the other kit said.

Snowkit tilted her head. These kits were much younger than her. What were they doing in the woods all alone?

Snowkit jumped as the one with lighter fur screamed, looking near the bush.

"What is it, Oceankit?" the she-cat asked.

"Blue eyes. I saw these two blue eyes just staring at me from that bush!" Oceankit screeched.

"Come out!" the other she-cat hissed.

Sighing, Snowkit came out of her hiding spot, leaves sticking to her pelt, making her look like she was a bush herself.

"Who are you?" the she-cat with darker fur, who looked older than the other kit, asked.

"I-I'm Snowkit," Snowkit said nervously, shuffling her paws.

"What are you doing out in the woods, Snowkit?" Oceankit asked.

"Don't ask her questions!" the older kit spat.

"But Wavekit, she looks as scared as I was when you found me," Oceankit said.

"True," Wavekit said. "What are you doing here?"

"I-I don't know," Snowkit said. "My mother brought me here one night and then she was gone the next day. I've been out in these woods for nearly a moon."

"You look much older than us," Oceankit exclaimed.

"I'm six moons," Snowkit said.

"I'm five moons," Wavekit explained. "Oceankit is four moons."

Oceankit let out a nod.

"What clan are you from?" Wavekit asked.

"BloodClan," Snowkit said.

Wavekit tilted her head. "BloodClan? I've never heard of it."

"Not a lot of cats know about it," Snowkit said. "We live in a deep part of the forest. If you step near the territory, you'll be killed."

"I suppose you're a vicious killer, then?!" Oceankit gasped. "WAVEKIT, WE NEED TO GET OUT OF HERE!"

"No, I'm not a vicious killer. I'm a softie. Most of the cats in my clan hated me. I would probably just end up being a nursery queen all my life because I wouldn't be a good warrior," Snowkit sighed.

"That's too bad," Wavekit said.

"We're from ForestClan," Oceankit explained. "Er, well *I'm* from ForestClan. My father died in a forest fire not too long ago. Wavekit found me and she's been taking care of me ever since. We're trying to find another clan to go to."

"SnowClan," Wavekit explained.

Snowkit tilted her head. "SnowClan?"

"It's a clan far away from here. I-I," Wavekit paused, as if she was looking for an explanation. "A cat, yes a cat, told me how great of a clan SnowClan is, so I decided to take Oceankit there."

Snowkit nodded, yet she detected that Wavekit was lying to Oceankit somehow.

"Would you like to join us?" Oceankit asked, bouncing with excitement.

Wavekit slapped Oceankit with her tail. "This kit can't join us! She'll slow us down!" Wavekit hissed.

"I'm not a kit!" Snowkit hissed. "I'm technically an apprentice. Besides, I'm older than both of you. And I know how to catch fish."

"You can catch fish?! Oh, Wavekit doesn't know how to. I've always wanted to catch fish," Oceankit said.

"Wow, you can catch fish," Wavekit said sarcastically. "Big deal. Come on, Oceankit."

"You're not going to just abandon her, are you?!" Oceankit asked.

"She's already been abandoned! She's an abandoned warrior!" Wavekit hissed.

Anger spiked Snowkit's pelt. "Wait just a second! I didn't *ask* to be abandoned! I was left out here alone! I don't know where I am. I don't know of any clans by here! I have been doing fine on my own! Don't you dare called me abandoned!" she hissed. But Snowkit knew she was abandoned and she wasn't doing great on her own. She had nearly died two weeks ago. She was desperate for some friends.

"Please, let her join," Oceankit said.

"She'll slow us down," Wavekit said.

"No, she won't," Oceankit said. "Just trust me, Wavekit."

Wavekit sighed. She then turned to Snowkit. "Would you," she gulped, "like to join us?"

"YES!" Snowkit exclaimed. "OH THANK YOU! THANK YOU VERY MUCH!"

"No need to get too excited," Wavekit said. "Are you ready to go?"

"Let me just brush the leaves off my pelt first," Snowkit said, rubbing them off.

Oceankit let out a laugh.

"I'm ready," Snowkit said.

"Well, let's go then," Wavekit sighed, beginning to lead the way.

Snowkit was so excited! She was going on a journey with other cats! She wouldn't be abandoned any longer!

Chapter 6

They had been traveling for three days, making very slow progress. The first day and a half seemed fun. Oceankit had shared stories of ForestClan and her past. When asking Wavekit about her past, she claimed she didn't remember and mumbled on. Snowkit knew she was hiding something though. But now they were on day three of their journey and Oceankit and Wavekit seemed to speak less and less, walking in silence most of the time.

"So....nice weather," Snowkit pointed out, for the fifth time that day.

No one spoke. They just continued walking in front of Snowkit, not even glancing back to check if she was still behind them.

"So, you're going to SnowClan. That's cool. I've never heard of SnowClan before," Snowkit admitted.

"That's because you don't even live near SnowClan," Wavekit hissed.

Snowkit stopped, taken aback by the kit's harsh words. She began to walk again, watching the ground, not even bothering to look up.

Despite the fact that Snowkit traveled with two other kits now, she still felt abandoned. What had seemed like a good friendship had turned into the relationship that Snowkit had with her siblings, though Oceankit and Wavekit weren't harassing Snowkit.

"I was named after my mother," Snowkit brought up a few minutes later, trying to break the silence.

"Is your mother dead?" Wavekit grumbled.

"No, she's alive. Her name is Snowfeather," Snowkit said, almost beginning to tell a story of her mother.

"Well then that's stupid that you're named after her," Wavekit mumbled.

Oceankit slapped Wavekit with her tail then quickly turned around, checking to see if Snowkit had heard her comment, which, she had.

"So, is there a reason that you're coming with us to SnowClan?" Wavekit asked as the sun stretched above them, indicating it was the middle of the day.

"I don't have a clan to go to," Snowkit said. "SnowClan seemed like a good place. Plus, my name is in it," she giggled.

Not a sound echoed from Oceankit or Wavekit's mouth.

After awhile, Snowkit began to feel a grumble in her stomach. "My am I starving!" she laughed.

Wavekit stopped then turned around. "Well, I guess we could go get some food."

"Okay," Oceankit squeaked. "Go catch us some fish, Snowkit."

"But, shouldn't you guys catch your own food?" Snowkit suggested.

"You said yourself that you could catch fish," Wavekit said. "And we decided to let you in this traveling group. The least you can do is get us some food."

"Oh, okay," Snowkit said, shrinking down. She went off, trying to find a river or stream nearby.

Snowkit growled, as she searched around, tossing a stick into a rock as she padded by. What was the matter with these two kits?! They had seemed so nice, but now they were just using her!

Frustrated, Snowkit sat, her teeth bared at nothing. Anger surged through her mind and pelt.

Out of pure frustration, Snowkit bellowed, "WHY AREN'T YOU HERE, MOTHER?!"

Pacing the ground, Snowkit hissed and growled, not even daring to look for a river or stream anymore. She dug her claws into the fresh soil, growling at such rage...She stopped. What was she doing? She had promised herself that she would never kill a cat. This was the kind of anger and rage that could kill a cat.

Snowkit shook the thought away. She had never been that angry before in her entire life. She sighed. It was probably because she had been holding most of the anger in, not releasing it until now.

"You have to catch some fish now, Snowkit," she reminded herself. "Behave, Snowkit," she said, almost tearing up as she thought of her dear mother, Snowfeather.

Snowkit looked around the forest, not even recognizing it anymore. She pricked her ears, not even hearing a stream nearby.

Following the scents of her "friends", she came upon the two whispering to each other. They stopped immediately, seeing Snowkit.

"Where are the fish?" Wavekit asked.

"There are no streams nearby," Snowkit said.

"But we're hungry," Oceankit whined.

"Fine, go catch a squirrel then," Wavekit said, shooing Snowkit back into the woods.

Growling, Snowkit padded back into the woods, looking for a squirrel. She sniffed the air, sniffing a rabbit. It wasn't a squirrel, but it was still prey. Snowkit leapt, stabbing her claws into the rabbit.

As she stabbed her claws in the rabbit, she slightly felt her anger drift away. She continued, slicing the dead rabbit with her paws until her claws and paws were coated in red blood.

Snowkit stood back, seeing the rabbit that had been sliced in so many places. Of course she couldn't eat it now. What was she doing? She laid down, her tears soaking the blood away from her paws.

"I didn't ask for this, StarClan!" Snowkit wailed. "Why aren't you helping me?"

She sighed, feeling sympathy for the rabbit that had died for nothing. Snowkit dug a hole, burying the dead rabbit inside. "I'm sorry," she whispered, covering the hole up.

"SNOWKIT!" Snowkit heard a loud call.

"Mother?!" Snowkit gasped, only hearing the noise, but seeing no cat.

"WHAT?! NO IT'S WAVEKIT! HAVE YOU GOT THAT SQUIRREL YET?!" Wavekit groaned, her voice muffled from a distance.

"ALMOST!" Snowkit yowled.

She paced around, looking for a good piece of prey. She stopped and crouched, seeing a mouse nearby. Snowkit pounced, catching the mouse between her paws. She steadied herself, only hitting the mouse once, enough to kill it.

With the dead mouse in her mouth, Snowkit padded back to Wavekit and Oceankit who sat on the ground, grooming each other.

"That's not a squirrel," Oceankit complained.

"There weren't any squirrels," Snowkit said, dropping the dead mouse at her paws.

"Ew! Is that blood on your *paws*?!" Wavekit gasped.

"Well...yes, but I was just..." Snowkit stopped. "I was..."

"You ate another piece of prey without us!" Oceankit hissed.

"No, no, I didn't," Snowkit said.

"Don't lie, Snowkit. We'll take that mouse," Wavekit said, grabbing it before Snowkit could grab it.

"But, really. I'm hungry. I haven't had anything!" Snowkit argued.

"Yeah, right," Oceankit said, biting into the mouse with Wavekit.

"Look, we're an alliance of cats," Wavekit said. "We're like warriors. And we *share* prey. Or well, you get the food, and give it to us. *Then,* you can eat some food. As for your punishment, you can't have any dinner tonight."

"You're not leader!" Snowkit said. "And I didn't eat anything! Are you trying to kill me?"

"I am leader. Only I know how to get to SnowClan. I can kick you out of this group easily, so I suggest you shut your mouth!" Wavekit hissed, her voice echoeing loudly.

Snowkit shrunk down, her blue eyes staring into Wavekit's green eyes.

"Good," Wavekit said.

Snowkit sighed as she watched them eat the mouse while she sat, looking longingly at the prey she would never eat.

Would she survive this whole trip?

Chapter 7

Snowkit bit into the fresh fish she had caught. Her first piece of prey in days. She was tired and hungry, unlike Wavekit and Oceankit who seemed like they could barely eat anything because their bellies were so full.

Snowkit had been their servant practically, fishing and finding food for them. She was only allowed to find something for herself when they had free time. But since they mostly just walked, Snowkit only got to eat something every few days.

She felt her legs get heavier and her stomach getting hungrier every day. It was almost the same pain that she had felt only weeks earlier when she was near death. But Oceankit and Wavekit didn't seem to notice how hungry Snowkit got and they continued to walk.

She lagged behind the two kits who bounced around easily as they continued their expedition. Oceankit and Wavekit never even looked behind to see if she was still there. They were probably hoping she had gone by now.

"Finish up!" Wavekit hissed as Snowkit licked off her paws.

"Wavekit, I haven't had anything to eat in days! The least you can do is let me eat!" Snowkit hissed.

Wavekit growled. "Don't give me that attitude. I can kick you out of this alliance right now!"

"Wavekit," Oceankit began, extending her tail out to gently touch her friend.

But Wavekit pushed her friend's tail away and continued to spat at Snowkit. "You have been nothing but trouble since you joined us!"

"Well maybe if you let me eat, I wouldn't be trouble! You use me as

your servant!" Snowkit hissed.

"No, I don't!" Wavekit hissed.

"Yes you do!" Snowkit growled. "You make me fish for you! You make me get moss for you! It's like you own me! I am so fatigued and tired! I was on the verge of death a few weeks ago and I'm starting to feel like I am again. I'm going to die if you don't treat me well!"

Wavekit was about to speak when Oceankit stepped forward. "I-I'm sorry, Snowkit," Oceankit sighed. "I guess we weren't aware that you're important to this quest too."

"Don't apologize!" Wavekit hissed at her friend.

But Oceankit continued to ignore Wavekit. "We'll make sure you don't die, Snowkit."

"Thank you," Snowkit said and dipped her head, showing gratitude towards the small gray tabby she-cat.

Wavekit rolled her eyes. She stood up, about to leave when Oceankit cleared her throat.

"What?" Wavekit asked.

"Snowkit is still hungry," Oceankit said.

"Ugh," Wavekit groaned, shoving her half eaten squirrel towards Snowkit.

"Thank you!" Snowkit gasped. She gobbled the squirrel up all within a few minutes. She licked her lips with satisfaction, her stomach becoming slightly filled.

"Do you need more food?" Oceankit asked.

Snowkit nodded.

Oceankit grabbed her uneaten rabbit and shoved it towards Snowkit. "I'm not hungry and you caught it. You can have it," she

said.

"Thanks, Oceankit," Snowkit said, quickly gobbling up the rabbit as well.

"Are you ready now?" Wavekit asked.

Snowkit nodded, shaking the bark off her white pelt. For once, it felt like the first day of the quest again, where they had all acted like her friend.

"Alright," Wavekit said, beginning to lead the way.

Oceankit stayed behind with Snowkit as they walked farther into the forest, the trees concealing them from the sun.

"So why were you left in the forest alone?" Oceankit asked.

"I don't know," Snowkit admitted. "I-I think my mother is dead."

"Why would you think that?" Oceankit asked.

"Because, she took me into the woods one night and promised she would be there in the morning. But she never returned. My mother would never abandon me. At least, I don't think she would. So she must be dead," Snowkit sighed.

"I'm so sorry," Oceankit said, lightly touching her tail to Snowkit's shoulder.

"My father is dead. And I never really knew my mother. She probably died in the fire too. I have no siblings, at least, I don't think so. What about you, Wavekit?" Oceankit asked.

"I-I don't know my family," Wavekit said quickly.

Snowkit tilted her head, wondering what Wavekit was hiding.

Oceankit shrugged and the two continued walking. They walked most of the day, chatting about what SnowClan would be like and about their pasts. Wavekit strayed away from the conversation, barely talking. She would lead the way and ignore Oceankit and

Snowkit completely.

As night began to fall, they found a nice place to settle near some rocks. The rocks provided shelter, almost hovering over them like a den. Each cat got their nest nice and soft and comfortable.

"I'm going to get some more moss," Wavekit said, padding off into the woods.

Oceankit settled down in her nest, curling up. She let out a large yawn and closed her eyes.

"I'm going to make dirt," Snowkit whispered.

Oceankit let out a nod and then Snowkit padded off.

As Snowkit padded into the forest and then later was about to pad off, she pricked her ears, hearing a noise.

"Snowfeather?" Snowkit whispered.

Snowkit gasped, hearing an evil laugh. She heard it coming from beyond the bushes. Slowly creeping down, Snowkit found a small hole. A small cat had gone through here! She crept down, slowly easing her way into the bushes.

As she continued walking, the sound faded, and she obviously had missed the spot. Hearing noises again, Snowkit turned around, growing closer to the sound.

"Perfect!" a familiar hiss came.

Snowkit stopped, glancing outside of the bush. She gasped to see Wavekit with...a dead fish?

No, she was putting something inside the fish! As Snowkit looked closer, she noticed round berries.

Berries? No, these were no ordinary berries. These were deathberries! Snowfeather had taught Snowkit all about them. But what was Wavekit doing with them?

Snowkit watched carefully as Wavekit carefully placed a handful of berries into the dead fish, sealing parts of the fish up at times.

"Perfect," she whispered. "I'll just tell Snowkit that I caught her a fish as a 'sorry' gift. She'll have to believe me. And when she eats it, she'll be dead. And we'll be able to continue our journey without her!"

Snowkit gasped. Wavekit was trying to kill her!

Chapter 8

Snowkit gasped. She couldn't believe it! That kit surely was evil! She was trying to kill Snowkit with deathberries.

Snowkit had to leave, right now. She couldn't afford to die. She couldn't say good-bye to Oceankit either.

Snowkit leapt away from the bushes and began to run into the forest.

"WHO'S THERE?!" A yowl from Wavekit came.

Snowkit gasped as she heard the faint sound of footsteps behind her. Wavekit was chasing after her!

Snowkit gasped, continuing to run, not even daring to look back. She knew Wavekit would find her eventually. She had to find a place to hide! As she continued to run, not daring to stop her pace, she noticed a large boulder with a hole big enough for her to fit into. She leapt into the hole, making herself comfortable. She was then silent, not even daring to breathe.

She shrunk down as Wavekit entered the clearing. "Hello?" Wavekit called, sniffing the air. Snowkit shrunk down farther, hoping Wavekit wouldn't find her.

"I know you're here!" Wavekit hissed, looking around.

Snowkit was trembling horribly, scared of the kit. She stayed silent and remained unmoving, trying not to to make a sound.

She was relieved when Wavekit left, but Snowkit stayed in the hole, just to be sure that the she-cat wouldn't return. Snowkit shut her eyes, getting comfortable in the small hole. Her eyes became droopy and she fell asleep.

When Snowkit awoke, the sun was just beginning to rise. Why was

she still here?! Oceankit and Wavekit could easily find her. Snowkit quickly leapt out of the hole, shaking the dirt off her pelt. Suddenly, Snowkit felt a drop land on her.

Was it rain? Snowkit looked up and smiled as she saw soft drops of a white substance fall from the sky. Snow. She could easily camouflage in the snow with her pure white pelt.

The sun was rising faster now and the snow continued to fall softly. Snowkit looked back at the forest that she had come from one last time, wanting to say good-bye to Oceankit. Snowkit sighed.

"Good-bye," she whispered, and sprang into the woods. She ran again, not daring to look back. She had to get as far away as she could from the kits. The snow fell faster now, almost blinding Snowkit. But she kept running.

Snowkit had decided to run until she could run no longer. Her paws touched the ground as she sprinted through the woods, the birds almost racing with her as she scared them away from their trees.

"Run, Snowkit," she told herself as she pelted through the bushes and trees, never daring to stop. Suddenly, she slipped on the icy ground and fell over, sliding towards the edge of a river.

Snowkit groaned. She was face to face with the river, its currents lapping at the side, splashing Snowkit in the face.

Exhausted, Snowkit stood up, her legs wobbly from the fall. Snowkit looked at the river. The currents were strong and there was no way she could just leap across. There had to be another way around! She couldn't stay in this part of the forest!

"Oh please, StarClan help me!" she hissed, anxiously waiting at the river.

The snow was covering her pelt and paws now, making the ground more slippery than ever. The snow might have been a blessing because it camouflaged her, but it was also a curse. She

had to cross the river fast. If the snow covered the ground before she crossed, she would leave footprints and Wavekit and Oceankit could quickly trace her whereabouts.

Snowkit laid down, tears forming in her eyes. She was doomed. She could never escape. Abandoned. She was the abandoned warrior.

"WHY, STARCLAN WHY?!" she yowled, digging her claws into the snow.

Snowkit began to wail, not caring how much noise she made, not caring if Wavekit and Oceankit found her. She just wanted to die! She hated her life! It had been terrible and would never become better!

She sniffed and her tears subsided as she felt the presence of another cat beside her.

"Mother?" she whispered.

She looked up and gasped as she saw a transparent pure white she-cat staring at her. "SNOWFEATHER?!" Snowkit screeched.

"Sh," the she-cat said. "My name is Stonecloud. I'm here to guide you, young one."

"A-Are you a cat from StarClan?"

Stonecloud nodded. "Please, quiet down. Wavekit and Oceankit have heard your cries. They are on their way right now. I will help you get across this river."

"Thank you," Snowkit whispered.

"Climb onto my back, but be quiet. You're dangerously close to being discovered." Snowkit nodded, slowly climbing onto the dead she-cat's back. Stonecloud's fur was smooth, unlike Snowkit's furry pelt.

Stonecloud dove into the water and Snowkit gasped as she felt the icy water lap at her pelt, causing her distress. Snowkit

shivered as Stonecloud eased through the river without any problem, the current not stopping her at all.

They soon reached the other side and Stonecloud lifted Snowkit out of the river. "You are safe now," Stonecloud said.

"Will you stay with me?" Snowkit asked.

"Perhaps," Stonecloud said. "But you must run now. Keep running until you can't anymore."

"But my tracks," Snowkit argued.

Stonecloud rested her tail on Snowkit's shoulder. "StarClan will hide them. Please, just run. Oceankit and Wavekit are almost at the river!"

Snowkit nodded, immediately speeding off, kicking snow as she pelted away. As she ran, thoughts spurred through her brain.

Who was that she-cat? Was she a BloodClan cat? Or a StarClan cat from another clan? Why had she saved her?

The snow was beginning to ease now, though it didn't help Snowkit's situation at all. The falling snow that fell hard before had concealed Snowkit, making her almost impossible to see. But now as the snow eased, she would be easy to spot.

Snowkit panted, beginning to feel tired and exhausted. But she kept running. She smiled as she came to a downhill spot. She almost jumped down the hill, the downhill portion quickening her pace.

She ran and ran until she could not run anymore. She collapsed in the snow, tired, hungry, thirsty.

"I made it," she whispered.

The forest smells had changed, indicating she was in an entirely different forest, far away from Wavekit and Oceankit.

"I did it, Snowfeather!" she shouted, sighing as she realized

her mother was not with her to see her act of bravery.

Snowkit sighed, looking around for some food, or at least a place to rest. She spotted a small mouse that had popped out of hole. Snowkit left, but closed her paws on air. As for water, Snowkit ate some of the snow, the frozen water quenching some of her thirst.

Snowkit looked around for a place to rest, only noticing a large log that provided some protection.

Snowkit padded in the log, a family of squirrels in there as well. The squirrels scurried, and Snowkit was lucky enough to kill one. Snowkit sat in the vacant log, eating the squirrel she had just caught.

Tired, her stomach and thirst slightly filled, Snowkit rested her head on her paws, looking into the snowy forest.

"Thank you StarClan," she whispered before she closed her eyes.

Chapter 9

Snowkit shivered when she awoke. It was morning. Had she slept all day? She had only gone to sleep that afternoon.

Snowkit looked around, noticing the thick blanket of snow that laid throughout the forest. The sun glittered off the snow, showing a beautiful scene.

Snowkit exited the log, her stomach growling. She sniffed the air, hoping to find some prey, but she scented nothing. Snowkit tilted her head. Where was the prey?

Snowkit trudged through the heavy snow, looking around for a piece of prey. She dug through snow, but found only the ground below. "WHERE'S ALL THE PREY?!" she hissed, becoming frustrated with herself.

She continued looking, only to return to the log empty-handed, her stomach still growling. Snowkit sighed, eating some snow to quench her thirst. "STARCLAN, HELP ME!" she pleaded, remembering how Stonecloud said she would return.

Snowkit growled. Why was StarClan just abandoning her like this? They led her to a different part of the forest, only to show her that there was no prey?! She paced around, hissing and growling, frustrated at StarClan and her mother.

Her mother! Why hadn't Snowfeather come to her?! Why was it Stonecloud?! Surely it should've been her mother leading the way. Unless...she wasn't dead! The thought sparked hope in Snowkit, though she couldn't understand why her mother hadn't stayed with her in that old forest.

Snowkit sighed, plumping herself down in the cold snow. "Mother," she whispered. Snowkit sighed, laying her head down on her paws, her chin dampened by the snow.

Snowkit was about to close her eyes and sleep when she saw a silvery light shining. Snowkit stood up, looking towards the light. Was it StarClan?

"Hello," she called, edging forward, her eyes blinded by the bright light.

As she came closer, she noticed the shape of a cat.

"Snowfeather? Stonecloud?" Snowkit said, easing her paw forward.

"My name is Silverwhisker," the she-cat replied. "I am a friend of Stonecloud."

"But where is Stonecloud?" Snowkit asked, tilting her head.

"She'll be here shortly. But for now, I will stay with you," Silverwhisker said, her gray tabby pelt shining.

"What are you doing here?" Snowkit asked Silverwhisker.

"Stonecloud and I will be here to help you," Silverwhisker replied.

"Help me with what?"

Silverwhisker paused. "We're here to make sure you survive. We'll teach you how to be a warrior, so that way you won't starve."

"You will?!" Snowkit gasped, bouncing up and down.

Silverwhisker smiled. "Yes, you are blessed by StarClan, Snowkit. No other cat has received this training before. But since there are no cats that could teach you nearby, we are substituting."

"Thank you," Snowkit purred. "My mother? Is she here?"

Silverwhisker paused, thinking of what to say. Before she could speak, however, Stonecloud floated down from StarClan, landing at Silverwhisker's side.

"Hello, Snowkit," Stonecloud said.

"Hi!" Snowkit said, bouncing up and down with excitement. She was going to be a warrior! "When do we start my training?!"

"Settle down," Stonecloud laughed. "First, we need to get something in your belly."

"I already tried looking for prey," Snowkit sighed. "There's nothing here."

"You're just not looking hard enough," Silverwhisker said, rising from her seat. She paced around the forest floor, digging at the snow, trying to find something. "Ah!" she said, uncovering something. "Over here, Snowkit," she whispered.

Snowkit padded forward quietly until she came to Silverwhisker's side. She looked at what Silverwhisker had uncovered. It was a hole. Snowkit was about to turn away when she picked up the scent of rabbit.

"How do we get them out?" Snowkit asked quietly.

"I'll scare them out," Silverwhisker replied. "Then you kill one."

Snowkit nodded as Silverwhisker began to dig at the hole until one rabbit came bursting out. Snowkit acted fast, killing the

rabbit in one swipe.

"Great job!" Silverwhisker congratulated her.

"Thanks," Snowkit said.

"Wow, you already know how to hunt?" Stonecloud asked.

Snowkit nodded. "I taught myself."

"Well you're pretty good, alright," Stonecloud said. "But I think we'll be able to teach you even more. Plus some fighting moves too. You never know who you'll meet in these woods."

Snowkit bit into the rabbit while listening to Stonecloud speak. Her words sounded great and all, but wouldn't Snowkit be able to join a clan? Did she have to stay alone in these woods? She didn't want to argue with the two StarClan she-cats who had taken her under their wing so easily, so she remained silent.

"What do we learn first?" Snowkit asked.

Stonecloud smiled. "Well you need the ultimate clan experience, don't you? We'll have to make a den and a nest for you..."

"I can use the log," Snowkit suggested. "It kept me covered."

"Good idea," Silverwhisker said. "I'll collect some moss," she said, padding away, her pelt still gleaming.

"We need a rock to do ceremonies on," Stonecloud said. With a flick of her tail, a rock came into view in the center of Snowkit's camp.

"How did you do that?!" Snowkit gasped.

"Little StarClan trick," Stonecloud replied.

"Can Silverwhisker do that?"

Stonecloud shook her head. "She hasn't been in StarClan long enough. She's only been in StarClan for a couple of moons. You have to be in StarClan for a while to do that."

"Oh," Snowkit said.

Silverwhisker quickly returned with the moss in her mouth. "It's nice and dry," she said, placing it in the small log that Snowkit had slept in.

Snowkit looked around her new home. It was small but felt perfect. For once, Snowkit let out a decent smile.

"Thank you all for taking me in," Snowkit said. "I don't know where I'd be without you."

Stonecloud smiled. "No problem, Snowkit. But I think it's time you received your apprentice ceremony."

"Really?!" Snowkit gasped, excitement filling her entire

body.

Silverwhisker nodded. "Stonecloud will perform the ceremony," the gray tabby said.

Snowkit padded up onto the rock with Stonecloud. She had always pictured a day like this, though she had wished her family was here and more cats too. The only cat she looked down upon was Silverwhisker who smiled at her.

"CATS OF STARCLAN!" she yowled. "Snowkit has reached six moons which means she is ready to become an apprentice. Snowkit from this day forward, until you receive your warrior name, you shall be known as Snowpaw!"

"SNOWPAW! SNOWPAW!" Silverwhisker cried.

"And as for your mentor, Silverwhisker and I will train you all about being a warrior and what it really means, not the silly BloodClan stuff they were going to teach you."

Snowpaw waved her tail and smiled, looking forward to her new beginning and home.

Chapter 10

Snowpaw awoke the next day to see a new layer of snow had covered the old, and the ground was soft with snow again.

Snowpaw yawned and padded out of the log. Today would be her first day of training to be an apprentice. She was anxious to begin. She had always dreamed this day would someday come, even if it wasn't in BloodClan. She preferred here in the woods much better than the vicious clan.

Snowpaw looked around, trying to see Silverwhisker or Stonecloud. Had they left? Had it all been a cruel joke? Thoughts spurred into Snowpaw's mind like crazy, making her think the StarClan she-cats had abandoned her, just like her clanmates had done.

She was relieved to see Silverwhisker padding out of the bushes with a water vole in her mouth. She dropped the vole at Snowpaw's paws.

"For me?" Snowpaw asked.

The silver she-cat let out a gentle nod.

"Thanks!" Snowpaw exclaimed, biting into the fresh piece of prey, her previous hunger now exchanged with satisfaction.

As Snowpaw finished up the vole, she gazed at Silverwhisker. "Where is Stonecloud?"

"She'll be here shortly," Silverwhisker said.

"What will we do first?" Snowpaw asked.

Silverwhisker let out a gentle mrrowl of laughter. "Well, we can't teach you all the aspects of the clans. Normally, we would show you around the territory and show you how to fetch moss for the elders, but since you aren't in a clan...we'll just be showing you

some herbs to heal wounds, some hunting techniques, ways to find shelter, and more. It'll be helpful to you out here."

Snowpaw opened her mouth, ready to argue that she wanted to join a clan, when Stonecloud padded through the bushes just like Silverwhisker had.

"Good morning," Stonecloud said. "Are we ready to begin?"

Snowpaw nodded, bouncing up and down with excitement. "Yes, Stonecloud!"

Stonecloud purred. "Good. Follow me. I'll be showing you some herbs. Silverwhisker will show you some more later."

Snowpaw told Silverwhisker good-bye and padded off with Stonecloud, ready to learn about herbs that would heal her.

"Now, I'm not sure what you'll face out here, but we'll be reviewing every day, so that way you'll know what to do," Stonecloud smiled.

"Alright," Snowpaw said.

Stonecloud sighed. "Unfortunately, it's leaf-bare, so not all the plants are in bloom. But with the power of StarClan, I'll be able to show you what it looks like. Now, what do you think could be out here in the forest?"

"Foxes, badgers, other cats," Snowpaw said.

"Good," Stonecloud replied. "But, you never know what you'll face. Foxes and other predators are the least of your problems. You could be bitten by a rat, stung by several bees, come down with whitecough or greencough."

"Wow," Snowpaw said. "There are lots of ways to get injured."

Stonecloud nodded. "Maybe one day you'll eat poison by accident too. There are cures for everything."

"Were you a medicine cat?" Snowpaw asked.

Stonecloud shook her head. "No, I was a warrior like any other cat, but we StarClan cats know a lot."

"What other challenges will I face?" Snowpaw asked.

"Maybe one day you'll have a mate and you'll expect kits. There are herbs that can help you too. Now, let's say you run into a fox. You fight it off, but you're terribly injured. What do you do?"

Snowpaw shrugged, not really sure. Her mind kept drifting back to what Stonecloud had said earlier though. What if she did have a mate and kits one day? She had never really thought of it. She had always just thought of seeing her mother and family again. But she was growing up fast, and she wouldn't need her mother anymore.

Stonecloud's words interrupted Snowpaw's thoughts. "There are many things to do if you become severely injured. First, cobwebs."

"Why cobwebs?" Snowpaw asked.

"They stop or slow the bleeding of your wounds," Stonecloud explained, leading Snowpaw to some nearby bushes.

As Snowpaw came closer, she noticed the familiar sticky, white substance on some bushes.

"Just grab some of this and place it on your wounds," Stonecloud said. "They're fairly easy to find, though look in trees and bushes, the snow will cover most."

"What else?" Snowpaw asked, curious to know more.

"Marigold," Stonecloud said.

"Marigold?"

"Yes, it is a flower that grows in the forest. It stops infection. But since it is not growing right now, come over here,"

Stonecloud said, leading her to a spot in the woods that was purely snow, no trees or bushes covering over it.

Stonecloud gazed at the ground. Snowpaw couldn't tell what she was doing. Suddenly, Snowpaw gasped as the sun pointed towards the snow, melting away at it. A yellow flower then began to sprout from the ground.

"Marigold," Stonecloud said.

"How do you do that?!" Snowpaw gasped as the brightness faded and the snow covered the ground up again.

"It's all StarClan's power," Stonecloud said. "Now, let's learn some more."

Throughout the morning, Snowpaw went over and learned about herbs that healed wounds from foxes, badgers, or other cats.

It was confusing trying to remember all of them, but Stonecloud was a great mentor, helping her out. She had shown her every herb with StarClan's powers, just like she had done with the marigold.

As they headed back to find Silverwhisker, Snowpaw reviewed all the herbs she had learned in her head.

Cobwebs for bleeding. Marigold for infection. Chervil for infected wounds. Comfry roots for soothing wounds. Dock for scratches. The list went on forever, and it was only her first day of learning the herbs!

Snowpaw smiled to see Silverwhisker walking around their small camp. Her face lit up into a smile when she saw Snowpaw and Stonecloud.

"There you are! How was learning about herbs?"

"It was great!" Snowpaw squeaked. "Stonecloud taught me everything about healing wounds."

Silverwhisker twitched her whiskers in amusement. "Great.

I'll be teaching you some valuable hunting lessons today."

Snowpaw smiled as she left with Silverwhisker, leaving Stonecloud behind in the camp. Snowpaw breathed in the fresh fumes of the forest, her paws touching the soft snow beneath her paws.

"So, what do we do first?" Snowpaw asked.

"Well, I heard you know how to catch fish and other prey, right?" Silverwhisker asked.

Snowpaw nodded.

"Well, new-leaf to leaf-fall shouldn't be a problem for you. But it's leaf-bare that you must learn how to catch prey. Later in your training we'll review how you normally catch prey. Anyway, in leaf-bare, prey is scarce which is why most cats struggle in the season. But you mustn't worry because there is always some prey," Silverwhisker said.

"Like what?" Snowpaw asked.

"Birds, voles, mice, anything really. You just have to find their burrows," Silverwhisker explained.

"But won't you confuse them with snake holes?" Snowpaw asked.

Silverwhisker nodded. "Many prey live in the ground until leaf-bare is over. Some live in the trees. Most birds fly south for the winter. We'll only be checking out burrows today. And you don't have to worry about snakes just yet," she laughed. "They don't come out in leaf-bare."

"Where are the holes?" Snowpaw asked.

"We'll look around," Silverwhisker said, beginning to walk.

Snowpaw followed after the silver she-cat, ready to hunt for some prey. Snowpaw gazed around the white forest, thinking about what her family was doing right now. Were they in BloodClan,

killing other rogues? Was her father leader now since Shadowstar was on his last life? How were Redpool's kits? Had they moved on from their father's death?

Snowpaw was interrupted as Silverwhisker came to an abrupt stop, making Snowpaw almost run into her.

"Found a hole," she whispered.

Snowpaw carefully stood on the other side of her, looking at the hole. It wasn't that large, but a rabbit or mouse could easily fit in it.

"What do we do?" Snowpaw whispered.

"Dig."

Snowpaw and Silverwhisker began to dig at the hole, trying to see if any prey lived in it. Snowpaw's eyes lit up when a mouse quickly scurried out of the hole. Snowpaw leapt, capturing the mouse in her paws, killing it in one bite.

"Great job!" Silverwhisker reassured her. "You're really good at hunting."

"Well I've been doing it for nearly two moons now," Snowpaw said, dropping the dead mouse at her paws.

Although they had successfully found the mouse hole, they were unable to find any other holes that contained prey. Snowpaw didn't really care though because she had a delicious mouse to eat, and that would surely fill her empty stomach.

Snowpaw padded back into camp with Silverwhisker, carrying the dead mouse in her jaws.

"That was all you caught?" Stonecloud asked.

Silverwhisker nodded. "We didn't have much luck today, but there's always tomorrow."

Snowpaw smiled, sitting down and beginning to eat the

mouse that she had caught.

"Did Snowpaw catch that?" Stonecloud asked.?

Before Silverwhisker could reply, Snowpaw answered her question for her. "I sure did!"

Stonecloud smiled at her apprentice.

Snowpaw smiled back, glad these StarClan cats had taken her in when no one else would. She was really enjoying it here.

Chapter 11

Snowpaw had been training as a StarClan apprentice for a few weeks now, learning herbs, how to hunt, and how to find shelter, plus some battle training. Silverwhisker and Stonecloud had been very supportive and taught her well.

As much as she loved being trained by the cats, she really wanted to be in a clan of her own, though she doubted any clan would accept her since she had technically been raised as a rogue, not counting her five moons of being a BloodClan cat.

Snowpaw still thought about BloodClan some days and wondered what her siblings were up to. She wondered what her mother was up to. Snowpaw still wasn't sure if her mother was dead or not and she still missed her and longed for her mother, though she knew her mother wouldn't come.

Snowpaw padded into her small camp with a skinny rabbit in her mouth. Leaf-bare was a hard season, yet she was still able to feed herself and take care of herself.

She sat down on the snowy forest floor, quickly indulging into the rabbit. She sniffed the air, scenting Silverwhisker.

"Catch a rabbit, did you?" a voice came behind her.

Snowpaw turned around, seeing the silver she-cat. "Yes, I did. Without your help!"

"My, you are doing well," Silverwhisker laughed. "Catch me anything?"

"You're a StarClan cat. You don't need anything," Snowpaw laughed. "Say, where's Stonecloud?"

"Busy," Silverwhisker replied. "You and I are going to practice some battle moves today."

"Cool," Snowpaw said, finishing up the rabbit.

She padded off into the forest with Silverwhisker, ready to learn some moves. She had already learned a few already, though it wouldn't help her in battle.

"We're going to practice pinning and knocking off, okay?" Silverwhisker asked.

"Alright," Snowpaw said.

"Pin me down," Silverwhisker said.

Snowpaw leapt at the she-cat, landing in the snow as Silverwhisker moved under her quickly. Snowpaw spit out the snow in her mouth.

"What?! Why did you move?!"

"A cat will not let you pin him in battle, Snowpaw. You must be quick and fast. Now, try again," she said.

Snowpaw nodded, leaping at the she-cat again and again and again, failing continuously. After being knocked in the snow again, Snowpaw groaned.

"Can I just give up now?"

"No cat gives up in battle," Silverwhisker said. "Now get up. Be fast, vigilant, alright?"

Snowpaw nodded. Holding her gaze with Silverwhisker, she quickly leapt, expecting to land in the snow again. But no. This time she landed on fur.

"I did it!" she screeched.

She held Silverwhisker down, but Silverwhisker knocked her paws off.

"What?!" Snowpaw screeched.

"You didn't pin me down hard enough," Silverwhisker said. "But that was a definite improvement from before. Now try again."

Snowpaw sighed and leapt again, landing on Silverwhisker once more. She held down Silverwhisker with all her might, but the slim she-cat squiggled out from under her.

"No fair," Snowpaw sighed.

"Okay, that's enough pinning for now. Okay, I'm going to leap at you. You must try to dodge me, okay?"

Snowpaw nodded, bracing herself for a flash of fur. She gasped as Silverwhisker came at her, knocking her into the snow.

Brushing the snow off her fur, Snowpaw sighed, ready again to try to dodge the she-cat. After failing a few times, Snowpaw was ready to give up. But then Silverwhisker leapt again and Snowpaw slid under her quickly, landing on the opposite side of her.

"Good," Silverwhisker smiled.

They practiced the move a few times, Snowpaw failing at times, but then succeeding once or twice. Snowpaw layed down, exhausted.

"I think that's enough practice for today," Silverwhisker said.

"Silverwhisker, can I ask you a question?" Snowpaw asked.

"What is it?"

"Well...what clan are you from? Are you from BloodClan?"

"StarClan. That's all you need to know. StarClan is united. I belong to StarClan."

"No, before you died," Snowpaw said.

"That is a tale you do not need to know," Silverwhisker said.

"Can you at least tell me how you died?" Snowpaw asked.

Silverwhisker paused for a moment, tears filling her eyes. But she shook the tears away. "Murdered. I was murdered."

"By who?"

Silverwhisker lashed her tail. "You don't need to know this tale!" she hissed.

Snowpaw gasped. She had never seen Silverwhisker act so vicious towards her. "Did you have kits? A mate?"

Silverwhisker turned away again. "Yes," she whispered.

"They must miss you a lot," Snowpaw said.

"No," Silverwhisker said. "BECAUSE THEY'RE ALL DEAD!" she hissed at Snowpaw. Snowpaw shrunk down, afraid of the she-cat. Silverwhisker seemed to realize she had scared Snowpaw and ran off quickly into the woods.

"Wait! Come back!" Snowpaw begged. But the she-cat was out of sight. Snowpaw sat, listening to the quiet falling of snow and the rustle of wind through the trees.

Sighing, she padded back to the small camp, seeing Stonecloud sitting there.

"Where's Silverwhisker?" she asked.

"She-she ran away," Snowpaw said.

"Why?"

"I-I asked her about her past," Snowpaw said.

Stonecloud's eyes widened. "You what?!"

"I'm sorry. I was curious," Snowpaw said.

"Snowpaw, never ask a StarClan cat about their past. Pasts are cruel."

"What was so bad about hers anyway?" Snowpaw asked.

Stonecloud sighed. "You're not going to stop until you know, do you?"

Snowpaw nodded.

"I'm just going to be vague here, but Silverwhisker...didn't have the best life. She had a wonderful mate and one day was expecting kits, but her mate, not a full cat of her clan, went off and left her with two kits. A she-cat and a tom. Silverwhisker was protective of her kits, not wanting anything to happen to them."

"What were the kits' names?" Snowpaw interrupted her.

"You don't need to know that," Stonecloud said. "But I'll tell you this. The tom was a brown tabby, looking like his father. The she-cat was a silver-blue with eyes that flashed red when angry...One day, the she-cat got mad at Silverwhisker and then Silverwhisker, hurt by her kit, spoiled the tom, making the she-cat feel...abandoned."

"A-abandoned?" Snowpaw asked.

"The she-cat wasn't like you though, Snowpaw. She was angry and mad at her mother. And the she-cat...met a rogue in the forest one day. And," Stonecloud winced, "the she-cat made an arrangement with the rogue to kill her."

"Silverwhisker's daughter murdered her?!" Snowpaw gasped.

"No," Stonecloud said. "Her daughter didn't murder her. The daughter made the rogue murder her. Then the she-cat's eyes flashed that blood red color. Murderous. No cat knew what she had done, but no sooner did she become an apprentice that she wanted a tom she could not have. She nearly murdered him and was about to murder her lover. But, her brother took the pain and the she-cat murdered her own brother..."

"That's horrible!" Snowpaw gasped. "Are these cats all dead now?"

"No. The she-cat is still alive," Stonecloud said. "But you must not speak of this to Silverwhisker nor tell her I told you this."

"Is the she-cat in these woods?"

"No, the she-cat lives far away," Stonecloud said. "And you are blessed to be safe from her. Now I'll go find Silverwhisker. You stay here and rest."

Snowpaw nodded, padding into the hollow log. She couldn't sleep though, not when she knew Silverwhisker's daughter was a murderer. How could such a kind she-cat give birth to a gruesome and cruel cat? Snowpaw sighed. Could she trust Silverwhisker now?

Chapter 12

After discovering the truth about Silverwhisker's past, Snowpaw had been more cautious and observant around her, not trusting her as much as she used to.

It had been about a moon or so since discovering the truth. Silverwhisker had not acted the same as she did, but she was still a great mentor. Stonecloud would tell Snowpaw about bringing up Silverwhisker's past left her in a depressive stage for awhile.

Snowpaw had to feel for the she-cat too. Her mate had left her, her daughter had murdered her son and hired someone to murder her, and now her daughter was an evil and vicious cat.

One day, Snowpaw couldn't take it anymore. She felt odd around Silverwhisker and had to cheer her up somehow. But she couldn't tell Silverwhisker that she knew the truth.

Snowpaw sighed, padding up to her for another hunting lesson. "Silverwhisker, is everything alright?"

"Fine," the she-cat quickly replied.

"No, it's not," Snowpaw replied. "You act so depressed now. Is this about your past?"

"I don't want to talk about," Silverwhisker groaned.

"But talking will solve your problems," Snowpaw said.

"No. Talking doesn't solve everything, Snowpaw. Talking doesn't solve war, or the murder of innocent cats," Silverwhisker said.

"War? Innocent cats?" This Snowpaw had no idea about.

"I do need to tell you the past. It'll help me and you learn from our mistakes," Silverwhisker said. "Come, sit beside me," she said, pointing to an empty spot on the snowy floor.

"I was born in FoxClan," Silverwhisker began.

Yes! An actually descriptive story Snowpaw thought.

"FoxClan? Where is that?" Snowpaw asked.

"It's in a forest far away. By SnowClan."

"SnowClan! That's where I was heading to when..." she stopped. "Continue."

"Yes, I was born in FoxClan. I lived a normal clan cat life. I

even met the love of my dreams. His name was Reedfur. He was charming, sweet, lovely. He was a thick-furred brown tabby tom with those bright green eyes that shone brightly. He was born in FoxClan, though he was of ForestClan descent. His father has been a ForestClan cat, his mother a FoxClan cat. He had family in ForestClan, sometimes even visiting there. Do you know about ForestClan?"

Snowpaw nodded.

"We became mates and one day, I found out I was expecting kits. Our leader, Sunstar, had also been expecting at the time, the deputy taking over for the time being. Anyway, Reedfur received a dream shortly before my kits' birth, claiming he had to go help ForestClan because they were in danger and needed help. He claimed he couldn't return because he didn't want to return to an empty camp with me gone. He didn't want to return hearing our kits had died. So he went to live in ForestClan.

"The night he was about to leave, I gave birth to two kits. A handsome brown tabby tom with the same green eyes as Reedfur. I also gave birth to a silver-blue she-cat with bright green eyes. The tom was named Owlkit and the she-cat...Moonkit. Reedfur left that morning without even saying good-bye.

"I didn't want anything to happen to my two lovely kits. I let them play with the other kits in the nursery, so they had some fun. But one day they snuck out and I lectured them. They had described their experience with a fox and I was scared for them. But then one day Moonkit lashed out at me and said she hated me. As a mother, it hurt me. I was hurt, still trying to keep in mind that Reedfur would not return. I was confused. I didn't know what to do, so," she sighed. "I spoiled Owlkit and practically abandoned Moonkit. I knew how it felt, but I didn't care. I was in too much pain.

"I hadn't really cared where Moonkit went. She would disappear now and then, though I would never go after her. One day, she claimed she would leave FoxClan. As much as I hurt, I couldn't let her leave! I rushed in the forest after her, only to be greeted by a muscular tom who...killed me. I turned to the bushes, seeing those familiar green eyes of my kit flashing a blood red.

"And I was in StarClan, looking down, wondering what had made my kit think killing me was the only way. Owlkit was hurt and sad. And Moonkit lied to the clan, claiming I had been killed by

a fox. Moonkit went all the wrong ways. The rogue who had killed me had become her mate and she became pregnant when she was about eleven moons.

"Then those two SnowClan cats showed up and Moonkit went insane, forgetting she was expecting kits and had a mate. She wanted to be mates with a tom who loved someone else. She tried to kill him, but failed. Owlpaw at the time had figured out she had murdered me, the clever tom. He had stopped her from murdering the SnowClan she-cat, but he had died instead.

"Moonpaw was exiled from FoxClan, going off to start her own clan. She gave birth to four kits, two of them scared of her and her evil clan of MoonClan. And then she got members and...there's going to be a war soon, Snowpaw. My little daughter took the name of Moonstar. She's killed so many cats...her own kits escaped to get away from her, two staying. She's murderous and evil. And those eyes, those blood red eyes..." Silverwhisker began to tear up. "I failed."

"Sh," Snowpaw said. "You didn't fail. Moonstar did. I know what it's like to be abandoned too."

"I know," Silverwhisker said. "Stonecloud and I know your story. That's why we're here. Thank you for listening, Snowpaw. Now, let's work."

Snowpaw spent the remainder of the time having the old Silverwhisker back. They hunted and talked about shelter, practicing fighting moves too. Snowpaw was nearly nine moons now, getting bigger and better at her moves.

She returned to her small camp, Stonecloud eyeing her.

"We talked. She's better," Snowpaw whispered.

Stonecloud smiled and dipped her head, acknowledging the young warrior.

As Snowpaw padded off to rest, she thought. She really missed her family, even if they were annoying. What if they were suffering from MoonClan right now? She shuddered and pushed the thought away. But what if her family was in danger? She had to protect them even if she was just a runt and abandoned!

Chapter 13

It had been a few weeks since the whole MoonClan encounter. Snowpaw had been worrying about her family and if they were okay or not. What if they weren't? What if they were injured? What if...they were dead?

She shuddered, trying not to think about it. The snow had gone down some, only patches remaining on the ground, but Snowpaw knew there was more snow coming. There always would be.

Snowpaw yawned as she arose then picked at a dead rabbit that was laid out for her.

"Why are you picking at your prey?" Stonecloud asked.

Snowpaw shrugged. "Just not hungry, that's all."

"Not hungry? You're a growing she-cat. You should eat," Stonecloud said.

Snowpaw sighed then turned towards Stonecloud. "Are we learning more herbs today?"

Stonecloud nodded. "Do you remember the ones I taught you yesterday?"

Snowpaw nodded, beginning to recite them. "Poppy seeds for distress, snakeroot for poison, yarrow for extracting poison, and tansy to cure coughs."

"Good," Stonecloud said. "You really are learning. You could be a medicine cat."

"But I don't want to be one," Snowpaw said.

Stonecloud laughed. "Don't worry, you don't have to. Today we're going to talk about the dangerous berries and such."

"Dangerous?"

"You didn't know there were herbs that could kill a cat?" Stonecloud asked.

"Oh, I knew," Snowpaw said. "I just didn't know there were more dangerous herbs other than deathberries. M-mother used to...talk about them," she sighed.

"Are you alright?" Stonecloud asked.

"No," Snowpaw sniffed. "I miss Mommy."

"I know you do," Stonecloud said, comforting the she-cat. "But, we have to move on. Your mother can't do anything for you anymore. You have to grow up on your own."

"NO, YOU LIAR!" Snowpaw hissed, her ears folding back with rage and her teeth bared. "SHE COULD'VE SAVED ME FROM THIS CURSE! SHE COULD'VE COME BACK FOR ME! SHE-SHE COULD'VE TAKEN CARE OF ME AND SHE STILL CAN! LEAVE ME ALONE!" she hissed, running off into the woods.

"Wait, Snowpaw, I didn't mean," Stonecloud's words faded out.

Snowpaw ran through the woods, some snow falling. Snowpaw wailed, nearly scaring every bird and piece of prey away. She continued running until she came to a large tree.

She stopped, curling up in its roots. She sniffed, tears streaming down her white chin. She remembered back to BloodClan where her mother had concealed her in her tail. Where her mother had given her a nest to sleep in when her siblings harassed her. Her mother had protected her.

"Snowfeather, come back," Snowpaw whispered.

Snowpaw looked up, seeing berries hanging from a bush. She knew exactly what they were. Deathberries.

A part of her wanted to grab one and eat it right there so

she could end it all. She hated her life and everyone in it. Why had StarClan given her such a cruel one?

Snowpaw groaned. Why couldn't she have saved that tom? Or Redpool? Why did she have to leave Oceankit and Wavekit? Why did StarClan have to watch after her when they had given her a horrible life? Where had her mother even gone?

Snowpaw buried her head in her paws, wailing.

Where even was she? She had wandered far from the tiny base camp they had. She stood up, looking around, the cold winter breeze sweeping at her fur.

"Hello?" Snowpaw called.

Snowpaw breathed in a familiar and warm scent. She gasped, seeing Silverwhisker standing beside her.

"Silverwhisker! How did you—"

"I'm a StarClan cat, Snowpaw. Wipe those tears from your face and don't you dare lay a claw on those berries. Why are you so depressed?"

"BECAUSE STARCLAN HAS GIVEN ME A TERRIBLE LIFE!" she spat, sweeping her tail.

"StarClan has only protected you," Silverwhisker spoke calmly.

"I should eat those berries!" Snowpaw hissed. "I hate my life!"

"So did I," Silverwhisker said, drifting over towards her. "But I grew to like it and accept it. And you should too. Things will get better."

"All you did was die!" Snowpaw spat. "How could you like that?!"

"Look," Silverwhisker said sharply. "I'm sorry you were

separated from your mother and family, but haven't you had good times along the way? StarClan has done so much for you!"

"Like what? What have you done for me?" Snowpaw asked.

"StarClan gave you food and shelter when you were on the brink of death. StarClan rescued you from being poisoned by Wavekit and led you across the river. We are training you to be a warrior right now! What more could you ask?" Silverwhisker asked.

"I want my family," Snowpaw whimpered.

"Your family that abandoned you and harassed you?"

"Not my mother!" Snowpaw hissed. "It may sound crazy, but I miss my father, brother, sister, and my mother."

"I am sorry, Snowpaw, but I can not help you with that. One day, you will understand," Silverwhisker sighed. "Now we better head back to base camp. Stonecloud still needs to show you those herbs."

Snowpaw sighed. "Alright," she said, drooping her tail as she padded back with Silverwhisker.

Snowpaw sighed, wondering if things would ever get better. Would she ever know the truth of her abandonment or not?

She got back to base camp, seeing Stonecloud in the camp.

"Snowpaw, I'm sorry for what I said earlier," Stonecloud said.

"It's alright," Snowpaw sighed. "I'm sorry for running off. Can you just show me the dangerous plants now so I won't poison myself?"

"Sure," Stonecloud laughed, leading her away from Silverwhisker and back into the forest.

Snowpaw padded through the forest, feeling the newly formed snow underneath her paws. Snowpaw and Stonecloud

almost blended in with the white forest, their coats almost the exact same color.

Soon enough, Stonecloud stopped at a spot. Snowpaw looked, spotting bright red berries that were quite round, very noticable in the white snow.

"Holly berries," Stonecloud said. "They're dangerous to kits. They're poisonous and could even kill a cat, but if treated quickly, the cat could survive."

Snowpaw nodded, glancing at the berries in the white snow. She had never seen them before.

"They look beautiful," Snowpaw said.

"That's the idea," Stonecloud replied. "Their beauty drags you in and it makes them look delicious. But don't eat them."

Snowpaw nodded, following after Stonecloud as they left the holly bush.

Stonecloud led her to another small clearing. Suddenly, Stonecloud began to float and light shone down on a spot of snow, revealing the ground underneath. Large, but beautiful, flowers rose from the ground, their colors of purple, yellow, and more. Seeds grew in them, some lying on the ground.

"Foxglove seeds," Stonecloud spoke. "Never eat them. They look like poppy seeds, but they can easily cause paralysis or failure of the heart."

Snowpaw nodded, watching as the flowers and seeds sunk down, snow covering the ground again.

"You must watch out for deathberries, foxglove seeds, and holly berries," Stonecloud warned.

"I will," Snowpaw replied, following her back to camp.

Which StarClan cat do you like better-Stonecloud or Silverwhisker? Why? What's your opinion on both?

Thanks for reading!

Chapter 14

Snowpaw had turned ten moons today, receiving a copious amount of training from the two StarClan she-cats.

Snowpaw hadn't even known how she had worked this hard. Her warrior ceremony would be in nearly two moons and she knew she would be prepared.

Snowpaw still thought back to her family, wondering if they missed her as much as she missed them. She wondered if Wavekit and Oceankit had gotten to SnowClan safely.

Snowpaw awoke in the night in her log, yawning. She had been dreaming about having a mate and kits lately, something that had just recently crossed her mind.

What would happen after she became a warrior? She would find a clan certainly. Maybe then she would have a mate and kits. She knew that hoping for her family to return was hopeless, but hoping for a mate and kits, not really.

Snowpaw sat, not able to fall asleep with these thoughts circling her head wildly like a cat chasing a mouse.

But soon enough, her eyes drooped, and she fell back asleep, lost in her dreams.

Snowpaw awoke to see that no snow had fallen. In fact, leaf-bare was beginning to end. It would be over fairly soon, and then new-leaf would come, bringing much prey to all.

Snowpaw yawned, getting out of her log and stretching, letting out a purr. It seemed as if her depression stage was beginning to end, though sometimes she still sat in the forest at night, longingly whispering her mother's name, calling for her siblings that most likely had new names by now, her father too. Was he leader?

"Good morning, Snowpaw," Stonecloud said, smiling at the she-cat.

"Good morning," Snowpaw replied. "I'm going to catch my own food today."

"Suit yourself," Stonecloud said, the StarClan she-cat drifting around the camp.

Snowpaw nodded, padding into the forest, pricking her ears for any sound of prey passing by.

She glanced around, padding through the small layer of snow. As she walked, she stopped, nearly gasping at what she saw.

She looked, seeing a small plant sprouting from the fragile ground. A small flower- not bloomed yet- hung from it.

"The first sign of new-leaf," Snowpaw breathed, quickly turning around and running back to her camp.

"STONECLOUD! STONECLOUD!"

Stonecloud stood up, glancing around. "Are you okay? Are you hurt?"

Snowpaw laughed and shook her head. "New-leaf is here! I saw a plant sprouting from the ground moments ago!"

Stonecloud laughed. "Your first new-leaf," she purred. "I remembered mine, seeing that first sign of life be known to the cats. That must mean the prey is returning. Go catch some food. I bet you'll find more than usual."

Snowpaw nodded, padding back into the forest, passing by the small plant again. She didn't know why, but she thought of it as her mission to make sure this plant lived. Snowpaw glanced around, then carefully pushed the snow away from it, leaving a nice amount of space around the fragile flower.

Snowpaw smiled, then headed back to looking for prey. Almost instantly, she noticed the tail of a squirrel zipping by and

racing up a tree.

Snowpaw had practiced tree climbing before in leaf-bare, nearly falling a few times, but the climbing the icy trees in leaf-bare would definitely make it easier in new-leaf.

Snowpaw slowly climbed up the tree, eyeing the squirrel that rested on a branch. Suddenly, she leapt onto the branch, grasping the squirrel in her paws. She suddenly slipped, letting the squirrel go. The squirrel fell down the large tree and Snowpaw looked away. She balanced once more, then headed back down.

Snowpaw arrived back on the ground, a pile of blood laying around the dead squirrel. For some reason, Snowpaw wanted to cry for the squirrel. It was an unfair kill, just like that rabbit had been. She didn't deserve to waste its life like that. But her growling stomach reminded her of how hungry she was, so she took the squirrel, heading farther into the forest to eat it.

After eating the squirrel, Snowpaw stopped for a drink at the river. The river seemed to have melted some, a little bit of water lightly flowing. Snowpaw dipped her head in and drank the ice cold water.

She headed back to camp, ready to learn more lessons. Silverwhisker was there now, beginning to pace back and forth.

"What's the matter?" Snowpaw asked.

"Something isn't right," Silverwhisker said. "I know it isn't...Something is going to challenge you, Snowpaw. Trust cats wisely..."

Snowpaw gave an odd look. "What do you mean, Silverwhisker? I've already been challenged."

"I think what Silverwhisker means is--" Stonecloud slapped Silverwhisker with her tail to stop her from pacing. "There will be more challengs on the way. Um, herbs. What did I teach you yesterday, Snowpaw?"

"Burdock root for rat bites. Cobwebs for bleeding. Marigold

for infection," Snowpaw said.

"Good," Stonecloud replied. "A good review. How was your hunt?"

"Well, I caught a squirrel in a tree," Snowpaw said, though guilt filled her. She hadn't really caught the squirrel *in* the tree. She had nearly killed it when it had fallen.

"Excellent," Stonecloud said. "Your tree-climbing lessons have payed off some. There is a slight flow in the river again. Silverwhisker, why don't you show her some fishing skills?"

The shaking Silverwhisker nodded, leading Snowpaw away from Stonecloud.

"Are you sure you'll alright, Silverwhisker?" Snowpaw asked.

"I'm fine," Silverwhisker spoke. A sudden flash shone in her eyes and she screeched.

"What's wrong?!" Snowpaw gasped.

"Large paws with large claws. A thick brown pelt. A growling roar," she spoke.

"What are you talking about?" Snowpaw asked.

"It's coming...it's coming for you," Silverwhisker said.

"What-what's coming for me?"

"A monster," Silverwhisker replied, shivering.

"C-can we please just learn how to fish now?" Snowpaw asked, nearly beginning to shake too. What did she mean by a monster? Snowpaw didn't understand. She did know one thing...StarClan cats were never wrong.

Snowpaw sat by the river with Silverwhisker, who had surprisingly begun to act normal again. She explain scooping up the

fish when the river was still partly frozen. She taught her some good lessons, but Snowpaw could not forget the words that Silverwhisker had said.

Large paws with large claws? A thick brown pelt? A growling roar? What sort of monster is this?

Snowpaw kept missing the fish, her thought wrapped around what Silverwhisker's words had been.

"Focus," Silverwhisker instructed.

"I-I can't," Snowpaw said. "Maybe we should just end this lesson."

"If that's what you want to do, then fine," Silverwhisker said, rising from the ground.

Snowpaw slowly got up, following Silverwhisker. Her tail drooped and she looked down, ashamed her lesson had not gone well.

It wasn't entirely her fault though. Silverwhisker had been the one to say those mysterious words to her. Suddenly, Snowpaw stopped. What if that was all staged so she could learn to focus through stuff like that?

"Why did you stop?" Silverwhisker asked.

"No reason," Snowpaw said, following after her again. Maybe Silverwhisker's words weren't right. Maybe it was all fake.

As they walked, Snowpaw suddenly realized she was by the plant again. She looked ahead, seeing Silverwhisker nearly ready to step on it by accident.

"NO!" Snowpaw screeched, knocking the she-cat away.

"What was that about?!" Silverwhisker hissed.

Snowpaw pointed her tail to the unharmed plant. "This plant is the first sign of new-leaf. It needs to survive."

"But there will be more plants, Snowpaw. Some animal will probably end up eating or stepping on it anyway," Silverwhisker said.

But Snowpaw did not want this plant to be harmed. She wanted it to grow into a lovely bush, one she could look at every day. One that she could go to when she was troubled. She wanted the plant to grow.

Or more importantly, Snowpaw wanted to grow away from the roots that held her to the ground.

Chapter 15

Snowpaw had been taking care of the growing plant for a few days, making sure no animal dared to step near it. The plant had grown some, the flower beginning to bloom a little. Snowpaw had smiled at it with such confidence and sometimes even whispered to the plant, "I know you can grow into a big bush."

It was obvious that new-leaf was just around the corner judging by the way that the birds had begun to chirp, the prey that had reappeared, the river that flowed quickly now. Snowpaw had even seen a fish jumping in the river at one time.

Snowpaw awoke early to check on her little plant. She exited her log, which was getting quite small for her, and then padded off into the forest.

The sun had just begin to rise, providing some light among the forest, but not much. Snowpaw gazed around, trying to find her little plant.

She stiffened as she heard a crack of twigs behind her.

"Stonecloud? Silverwhisker?" she whispered.

Another crack of twigs came.

Snowpaw turned around but saw nothing.

She was beginning to get scared now and was just about to run. As a third crack came, she bounced away, running as quickly as she could. What was in the forest?

She stopped to catch her breath. She had gone past the plant. The plant! That animal could've eaten it.

Once she regained her breath, she bounced off again in the direction of the plant. It sat, unharmed, bringing relief to Snowpaw.

"Thank goodness you're okay, little plant," Snowpaw spoke.

But she began to hear noises again and before she could speak, a large brown paw came down on the plant, crushing it.

"NO! WHAT DID YOU DO?!" Snowpaw screeched, looking up.

A brown tabby tom stood before her. He looked about her age and towered over her since Snowpaw was quite small.

"What? The plant?" the tom asked, taking his paw away.

Snowpaw was about to cry. The small plant was crushed and ruined and soon the remainder of it would die.

"Why did you kill my plant?!"

"Your plant? I think it's the forest's plant. It's just a little plant, nothing more," the tom spoke.

Snowpaw felt anger bubble inside her. How could the tom let this go so easily?

"I was hoping to find another cat in the forest. My name is Bear. What's yours?"

Snowpaw was too angry to even answer the question. After a long silence, she finally spoke. "Snowpaw."

"Snowpaw? Hey, you're a clan cat, aren't you? I've heard about those before. Is there a clan around here?" Bear asked, pricking his ears and glancing around.

"No, it's just me," Snowpaw said.

"Then why aren't you in a clan?"

Snowpaw ignored his question. "Why are you even in this forest anyway?"

Bear turned, showing a long scratch down his pelt. It was

new and Snowpaw almost gagged at the dried blood that lay to the side of it.

"Got into a fight with a fox. He tried to steal my food. I was injured and needed some assistance. I was hoping to find some cat here," Bear said.

"You need to get that cleaned immediately! It could get infected!" Snowpaw gasped.

"Wait, you know how to fix it? Are you what those clan cats call a 'medicine cat' or something?" the tom asked.

"No," Snowpaw replied. "Come with me. I'll fix your wound."

The tom nodded, slowly following her. The wound seemed to slow him down and at times he stopped and winced, then continued on.

The sun had fully risen now, lighting up the forest that had been dim before. Finally, Snowpaw arrived in her camp.

"What is this? A little camp or something?" Bear asked.

"Yes, it's where I live," Snowpaw said. "Sit down. You shouldn't be walking with that long scratch. You probably traveled very far to get here."

"One full day," Bear said. "Day and night. Do you have any food or water? I can't easily catch prey with this wound."

"I'll see what I can do," Snowpaw said. "I'll be right back. Stay here."

The tom nodded and Snowpaw padded off into the woods. "Marigold for infection," she spoke, looking around to see if the yellow flower had sprouted.

As she looked, she sensed a familiar scent. She turned, nearly falling over as she saw Silverwhisker.

"What are you doing?!" Silverwhisker gasped.

"What do you mean?"

"Why are you out here in the woods caring for this tom?" Silverwhisker asked.

"He has a bad wound, Silverwhisker, and I know how to cure it. I'm not going to leave him in the woods to die. Have you seen any marigold plants around here?" Snowpaw asked.

"Trust wisely," Silverwhisker said, then drifted away.

Snowpaw shrugged and kept looking through the woods. She knew Bear would probably be wondering where she was by now and she was beginning to worry she wouldn't find any marigold. Soon enough, she spotted the yellow flowers blooming and she quickly grabbed a bunch of them to apply to his wound.

She laid the marigold in a leaf, then carried the leaf until she spotted a rabbit. Snowpaw's stomach grumbled and she leapt, catching the rabbit.

Snowpaw was about to bite into it, but then realized Bear was hungry and tired, and the rabbit should surely be for him.

With the rabbit and leaf in her mouth, she arrived back to her base camp to see Bear still sitting there.

"I didn't think you'd come back," Bear said.

"Of course I would. Here, take this rabbit," she said, pushing the rabbit towards him.

He thanked her and she set the leaf down next to him. She chewed up the marigold then pressed it to his wound.

Bear winced and screeched almost immediately.

"Settle down," Snowpaw spoke. "It'll make you feel better."

After she applied it, Bear sighed. "Much better," he said,

finishing up his rabbit.

"I'll get you some water," Snowpaw said, padding off into the woods once more.

As she reached the river, she noticed Stonecloud waiting for her. "I see you have a friend here."

"Not a friend," Snowpaw said. "Some tom wrecked my plant and now I'm fixing his wound. I'm just getting him some water."

"Alright," Stonecloud said. "But I hope this doesn't get in the way of your training."

"It won't," Snowpaw reassured her.

Stonecloud dipped her head and padded off while Snowpaw drank some water then grabbed much moss, some for drinking, and some for a nest.

She arrived back to see Bear resting. "My wound feels much better," he said as she arrived.

"Here's some water," Snowpaw said, pushing the piece of moss to him.

"Thanks, Snowpaw. It is Snowpaw, right?"

Snowpaw nodded then began to stomp on the moss she had just gathered, squeezing and stomping on it. The water flowed out and Bear watched.

"What are you doing?" he asked.

"I'm making a nest for you," Snowpaw said. "You'll have to stay here for a few days until the wound heals."

"Oh, are you sure I can't leave today?" Bear asked.

Snowpaw did not know why, but she felt hurt by his comment. She had been longing to speak to a living cat for so long and she had shown so much hospitality to this tom, just for him to

decide to leave.

"That wound could get infected," Snowpaw said.

"You could show me the flower," Bear said.

Snowpaw sighed. "I haven't talked to a real cat in moons. Please, could you stay for a little bit. I'm not asking for a long time, just a little."

Bear thought for a moment. "A few days. I'll stay for a few days."

"Thank you!" Snowpaw screeched. Excitement filled her and she wanted to scream. Maybe things were finally starting to get better.

Bear seemed to settle down and sleep and when he did, Silverwhisker and Stonecloud appeared.

"Are you sure this is the right choice to let this tom stay?" Stonecloud asked.

"Of course it is," Snowpaw replied. "His wound needs tending to and...I've been so lonely."

Silverwhisker sighed. "I guess she's right, Stonecloud. We're just StarClan cats. She should really socialize with cats that are actually alive."

"I still like hanging out with you guys," Snowpaw reassured the two she-cats. "I just haven't gotten to hang out or even speak to another cat in forever. You understand, don't you?"

"I guess," Stonecloud said. "Will you be doing training?"

Snowpaw looked back at the tom who slept peacefully. "Sure," she said, padding off into the woods with the two she-cats.

Their training was short since Snowpaw had wasted a lot of time caring for the tom earlier in the morning, but they were still able to go over some more herbs and do some fighting lessons.

When Snowpaw arrived back, the tom seemed relieved to see her.

"I didn't know where you had gone. I thought you left," he said.

Snowpaw laughed. "No, I wouldn't. I was just tr—" She stopped. She couldn't tell this unknown tom about Silverwhisker and Stonecloud. "Hunting. I was just hunting," Snowpaw said.

"Oh, alright then. Do you mind applying more of that medicine to my wound. It's stinging again."

"Not at all," Snowpaw said, fixing up his wound.

The tom did not do much for the rest of the day. At times he got up to stretch and most of the time he just slept, with the exception of Snowpaw bringing him food at times.

As the sun finally set, the tom laid down on the mossy nest that Snowpaw had provided for him. Snowpaw padded into her little log and watched the tom fall asleep. Was this what it was like to have a friend? She'd never really had one before and sure, the tom had just met her a few hours prior, but she felt as if they'd be friends forever.

What do you guys think of Bear? Does he seem like a pretty nice and trustworthy guy or do you dislike him? Comment your thoughts below!

Chapter 16

Snowpaw awoke, yawning and stretching. The snow had melted even more and now large parts of the ground were visible.

Smiling, she looked around to see Bear's nest empty.

Snowpaw widened her eyes. No, the tom hadn't left. He couldn't have. He had promised he would stay!

Snowpaw was nervous now and she looked around. There was no sign of the tom at all. She began to run into the woods.

"BEAR! BEAR!" she screeched.

She nearly ran into the tom.

"Gosh, what's the problem, Snowpaw?!" he groaned, rising back up.

"I-I thought you left," Snowpaw whispered.

"Leave? Nah, I'm staying right here. It's pretty nice out here," Bear said.

"Holy StarClan, Bear, your wound!" Snowpaw gasped. It had seemed to be much smaller and healed better. There were no signs of infection at all.

"Oh, yeah. I don't know what you did, but you fixed it up pretty good and I can walk normally again. I was just out here hunting."

"Oh, sorry to interrupt," Snowpaw said. "I'll leave you to hunt then."

"You want to come with me?" Bear asked.

"Would I?!" Snowpaw smiled and padded after the young

tom.

Bear glanced around the forest, looking for prey. Snowpaw didn't know why, but she felt very nervous around him and was scared she'd scare prey away or make him mess up.

As they walked, Bear suddenly stopped, then looked up into the sky.

"What are you—"

"Sh," Bear spoke. No sooner did he speak, a flock of birds landed on some nearby trees. "We'll climb up these trees."

"What? With your wound?!"

"Not so loud," Bear hushed. He placed his leg onto a branch and began to climb. "Come on, Snowpaw."

"I don't know," Snowpaw said. "What if I fall?"

"You won't fall. Now come on," Bear said.

Snowpaw sighed and began to climb up the tree with the tom. She didn't know why, but she already trusted him fully even though she had only met him the day prior.

Bear continued to walk up the branch, sinking his claws into the bark. Snowpaw thought back to her lessons in the winter where she would slip. This was surprisingly easy. The bark was no longer slippery. It was rough and dry, perfect for climbing.

Bear was near the birds now. "They'll probably fly towards you," he said. "Kill them when they do."

With a yowl, he leapt into the flock and they flew down. Snowpaw leapt into the air, swiping her paws. She had no idea what she was doing. At one point, she swiped a bird and when she came down, she didn't land on the branch. She was falling. Snowpaw gasped and sunk her claws into a branch, dangling from the large tree.

"BEAR! HELP!" she screeched.

The tom looked down, seeing her dangling. "Hang on, Snowpaw!"

Snowpaw held on for dear life, but her claws began to slip and Bear wasn't coming down the branches fast enough.

Snowpaw shut her eyes and let go.

"SNOWPAW!" Bear yowled.

Snowpaw landed on something hard, then blacked out.

When Snowpaw opened her eyes, she was back in her camp. Was it all a dream? It must've been. But Snowpaw felt pain in her shoulder. When she looked up, she saw Bear gazing at her.

"Wh-what happened?" she asked.

"You fell. I caught you."

"Did you get the bird?" Snowpaw asked.

Bear laughed. "I don't really think that's the important thing right now."

"Thanks," Snowpaw smiled. She tried to stand up, but her shoulder pain kept her down.

"You might want to lay down for awhile. Your shoulder is not broken," Bear spoke.

"How do you know how to heal? Don't you think I *know* it's not broken?" Snowpaw asked.

"My mother knew herbs just like you. She was especially good with broken bones," Bear said.

"What happened to your mother?" Snowpaw asked.

"I don't know. I left my family behind and went off as a rogue," Bear spoke.

"My mother left me," Snowpaw said.

"Really? Why?"

"I-nevermind," Snowpaw sighed. She suddenly locked her eyes with Bear and then turned away quickly.

"Your blue eyes are really pretty," Bear said.

What was this odd feeling inside of Snowpaw? She had never felt it before. "Oh, uh, thanks," she purred.

"You're one of the most beautiful she-cat's I've ever laid eyes on," Bear whispered into her ear.

"R-really?" Snowpaw asked.

Bear nodded.

"Well, you're on of the most handsome toms I've ever laid eyes on," Snowpaw said. This was true. She had never really talked to any toms before, besides those in the nursery.

Was she falling in love with the tom? They had only met the day before, but she knew something was different about him. He understood her better than any cat that had ever before. He almost understood her better than her mother.

"I'm going to get some prey. You stay here," Bear said.

Snowpaw felt a pang of sadness as the tom walked away, but she stayed. As he disappeared out of sight, Stonecloud and Silverwhisker appeared.

"Hey!" Snowpaw said.

But Stonecloud and Silverwhisker did not smile.

"What?"

"Training?" Silverwhisker asked.

"My shoulder's sore though," Snowpaw spoke.

"You were supposed to train earlier this morning, remember?" Stonecloud asked.

"Oh, that's right. Sorry," Snowpaw said.

"This tom better not get in the way of your training," Silverwhisker said sharply. "You still need to train, Snowpaw. And you *know* we can't appear in front of the tom. He'll think he's gone delusional."

"Well, I can't train right now. My shoulder is sore," Snowpaw argued.

"Oh for StarClan's sake," Stonecloud rolled her eyes. A light suddenly flashed on Snowpaw's shoulder and when Snowpaw moved it, she felt no pain. When she stood up, her shoulder did not hurt anymore.

"Y-You healed me!" Snowpaw gasped.

"Now you can train," Stonecloud smiled.

"No, I can't. Bear is getting me food right now. I can't leave."

"And what's so special about this 'Bear'?" Stonecloud asked.

"He understands me and I think he likes me and I think I like him," Snowpaw smiled.

"Are you sure?" Silverwhisker asked.

"Yes, why wouldn't I be sure?"

Silverwhisker did not reply. "What's it going to be, Snowpaw? Training or Bear?"

"No, don't make me choose! We can do both!" Snowpaw reassured them.

"No, you can't," Stonecloud said. "You can't handle these two things at once, Snowpaw. We're leaving now."

"Leaving? What do you mean?!" Snowpaw gasped.

"Leaving as in your training is over now," Silverwhisker said.

"But I haven't even received my warrior name! I haven't finished!" Snowpaw whined.

"We'll finish your training, but you have to stay away from Bear," Stonecloud said.

"NO! HE'S MY ONLY FRIEND! I-I LOVE HIM!" Snowpaw looked down, embarrassed.

"Good-bye, Snowpaw," Silverwhisker said.

"No! Don't leave!" Snowpaw pleaded.

But the two she-cats looked back at her and faded, leaving Snowpaw alone.

Snowpaw sat down on her nest and began to cry. Her mentors couldn't leave her! This was all unfair!

Chapter 17

Snowpaw was confused about her emotions. She wasn't sure if she would miss her mentors or not.

But whatever she felt, she knew that she felt anger. How dare her mentors try to make choices for her! She was more angry than sad. As of now, she was developing a hatred towards StarClan again.

But when she saw Bear, she would forget about what she was dealing with, and all her worries would fade. Because when she was with him, it was like the world had stopped spinning. Snowpaw knew what the odd tingling in her paws and feeling in her chest was now. It was love. She was in love with Bear.

Snowpaw felt Bear's thick coat brush against hers as she opened her eyes. She had moved her nest next to Bear's now since the log couldn't fit them both.

"Good morning," Bear spoke, rasping his tongue against her cheek.

Snowpaw purred and looked at Bear's leg. The wound was completely gone now, only a pale scar remaining. Nothing too noticeable.

"How does my leg look?"

"Fine, it's all better now," Snowpaw smiled.

It was obvious that Bear loved her, especially how they gazed into each other's eyes and cared so greatly for one another.

As Snowpaw stood, she sighed.

"What's the matter?" Bear asked.

"Your wound is all better...I guess we agreed that you could go now..."

"Really? Wow, that's great!"

Snowpaw's heart broke as she heard these words. She thought Bear cared for her, but obviously he didn't.

"Why are you so sad?" Bear asked.

"I just didn't want you to leave," Snowpaw sighed.

"Leave? Well of course I'm leaving, but Snowpaw, you're coming with me," Bear said lightly.

"R-really?"

"What did you think I was going to let happen to my favorite she-cat? I wasn't just going to abandon you!"

You have no idea Snowpaw thought to herself.

"Are you ready to go?" Bear asked.

No, this isn't right Snowpaw thought. She didn't know why she couldn't just go. It was as if she needed to stay here.

"Not yet," Snowpaw said.

"When did you want to leave then?" Bear asked, tilting his head.

"I don't know why, but I feel like I belong here. This is my...home," Snowpaw said.

"But Snowpaw, there are so much better things out there! This forest is empty and dead. Don't you want to explore?" Bear asked.

"I-I guess," Snowpaw sighed.

"Then let's go!"

Snowpaw moved one foot forward, then stopped. "Can we just stay for a few more days? Please?"

Bear sighed. "You really can't leave this place, can you? Fine, we can stay until there's a full moon. The next full moon will be in about seven sunrises. We'll stay until then."

"Thank you, Bear!" Snowpaw shouted, licking the tom affectionately.

Bear didn't seem to happy with the decision, but Snowpaw was glad that he cared about her.

"What do you want to do?" Bear asked.

Snowpaw shrugged. "Well, since I'm only going to be here a few more days, how about we climb the tallest tree in the forest?!"

"Really? You want to do that?"

Snowpaw nodded. "I know where it is! I pass by it a lot!"

"Snowpaw, are you sure? Remember what happened last time you climbed a tree?"

"I'm sure, Bear."

"Alright," he said. "Lead the way."

Snowpaw nodded and began to walk into the dim-lit forest. For some reason, it didn't seem as calm and happy as it did when her mentors were here. Now there was only dark in the forest, and only a tiny bit of sunlight filtered through the tall trees.

As Snowpaw walked, she wondered if she had made the

right decision about Bear. Was it a good decision to go off with him? Was he really that trustworthy?

Of course he is Snowpaw thought to herself. *He loves me, and that's what matters.*

Snowpaw still felt an odd feeling though...Why hadn't StarClan approved of him?

As she walked, Snowpaw stopped at the largest tree in the forest. It reached into the sky and the branches hung proudly.

"This is it?" Bear asked.

Snowpaw nodded. With no words, she placed her first paw onto the branch. Then another, until all four paws were on the branch.

Bear hesitated, then followed her.

"These trees are dangerous," he warned.

"That's what makes it fun," Snowpaw laughed. "I just want to get to the top to see the whole forest. I want to feel the wind in my face. I want to look down and see how far I've come. That'll be a story to tell."

"Sure will," Bear grunted.

Snowpaw followed him as they walked up branch by branch. Leaves concealed them from the rest of the forest, and they walked slowly and silently.

Snowpaw had never done anything so big or so wild before. She was just a small runt born in a vicious clan that had been abandoned as a small kit. Who knew she could climb to the top of this tree? She was sure her siblings wouldn't.

Flighkit. Icekit. She missed them terribly. She assumed they had apprentice names by now. She assumed they were alive, not abducted by MoonClan.

Snowfeather. She missed her most of all. Snowpaw wanted to be just like her mother because she knew that when she had kits, she would treat them just as her mother did. Snowpaw smiled at this thought.

Her father...Was he leader of BloodClan now? She hoped he was.

"Are you okay?" Bear asked. Snowpaw's thoughts were suddenly interrupted.

"Yeah, just thinking..."

"About what?"

"Bear, I haven't been completely honest with you."

"What do you mean?"

Snowpaw sighed. "Well, I guess you could say I'm a clan cat, but...I grew up in a really terrifying clan. I witnessed a purposeful death at three moons..."

"Purposeful?"

"In our clan, to prove you were ready to be a warrior, you had to kill another cat. It was usually a rogue they had found patrolling around."

"That's not too bad," Bear said. "I was on my own at six moons."

"I was on my own at five."

"Huh?"

"Remember how I mentioned my mother before? Well, she loved me very much. I had a brother and a sister who hated me. My father was deputy. They were all vicious and wanted to kill. My mother wasn't like that. She was downgraded to a nursery queen for the rest of her life because she refused to kill a cat. Then one day," Snowpaw cringed as she felt the tears coming on. "Our leader's son...he saved me. I was drowning and he died. And then my mother took me into the forest..."

"Snowpaw are you alright?" Bear asked as he stepped onto another branch.

"No. I woke up in the forest...it was a new one. My mother was gone. I almost died, but I lived. And that's how I ended up here."

"You were ditched in this forest?"

"No, another. I met these cats. I thought they would save me, but they tried to kill me. I ran away and have been here since."

"Snowpaw, you have had a rough life," Bear sighed.

"Some cats call me the abandoned warrior..."

"Well no one will abandon you anymore. I promise," Bear said.

"Thank you," Snowpaw smiled.

When the sun began to set, Snowpaw knew she was almost at the top. She could feel the wind picking up, and then suddenly, she could see everything. The green trees glimmered in the golden sun. Snowpaw felt the wind blow against her pelt and she let out a smile.

"Wow," Bear said.

They stayed until the sun vanished and the moon and stars

came out. Laying down on a large branch, the two huddled together, smiling.

"Wow, Snowpaw. I didn't think you would make it," Bear laughed.

"Of course I would!"

"I'm just kidding. Good night."

"Good night, Bear," Snowpaw smiled, licking his ear.

There was a long silence, and Snowpaw finally spoke again. "Bear, do you love me?"

"To the moon and back," Bear replied.

"I love you too."

Chapter 18

Snowpaw and Bear spent the next day climbing down from the gigantic tree that they had slept in the previous night.

As they climbed down the tree, they would laugh, tell jokes, share stories, fall in love.

Snowpaw couldn't have felt any happier than she was as they slid down the rough branches.

All she could think about was the future. It would only be a few days now until she and Bear would run off together.

They'd have kits, Snowpaw was sure of that. She would have three girls, one with a frosty white pelt and two with a brown tabby pelt. She guessed that she and Bear would decide the names of the tabbies, but Snowpaw knew that she would name the white one Snowkit, after her mother.

It was a silly daydream that Snowpaw had thought of, but it was as if her future was so close, yet so far away.

Whether or not Snowpaw ever had kits or had three girls, she would definitely care for them with love, never letting them frolic on their own.

"Snowpaw."

Snowpaw's thoughts were interrupted by Bear's charming mew. She pricked her ears and looked at the tom. "Yes?"

"We're almost near the ground," Bear said.

Snowpaw looked down, seeing they could easily jump from here, but she didn't want this moment to end. "Why don't we just walk down?"

"Not jump?" Bear asked. "I thought you were a wild she-cat," he

laughed.

Snowpaw rolled her eyes and laughed. "I just don't want this moment to end...with you," she spoke.

Bear's smile faded. "It won't. I promise. We'll leave in the next few days, and then we'll be off and about, side-by-side. And the best part is that we'll go on adventures together."

"Maybe we'll even have kits running around," Snowpaw smiled.

"You're--"

Snowpaw's eyes widened. "StarClan, no! It was just a little daydream of mine since I never had a good kithood."

"Are you suggesting that we're mates now?" Bear smirked.

"We are right?" Snowpaw suddenly froze up inside. Had she gone too far? Did he only think of her as a friend? No, that couldn't be. They had admitted their love to each other only the night before.

"Does this answer your question?" Bear asked as his tongue lightly licked her cheek.

Snowpaw smiled. "I guess that's a 'yes' then."

"I'm jumping," Bear said.

"J-jumping? Are you sure?!" Snowpaw asked. She was worried her mate wouldn't land right. What if he broke his leg, or paw, or...died?

"Relax Snowy, it'll be fine. Let's do it at the same time then," Bear said.

"One," he breathed.

Snowpaw tensed up as she looked at the soft ground beneath the branches. Could she really land on her feet?

"Two," Bear said.

Snowpaw closed her eyes. Please help me StarClan she thought.

"Three!" Bear yelled.

And she leapt, and it felt amazing. It was as if she was a bird, flying away from the past. And she landed on her paws. Bear did too.

Bear laughed. She laughed. They collapsed onto the ground in laughter, staring up at the tree. Had they really climbed that tree?

Then Bear turned towards her with the same look on his face, and they both smiled and laughed into the evening sun.

It had been a few days since their big tree experience, and Snowpaw had been excited to get away.

Sure, she had not felt that way in the beginning, but she was beginning to get more excited now.

She gazed into the stars as Bear slept next to her.

Tomorrow would be their last day in the forest, and the next day they would leave.

She had already decided that she would spend her last day prowling around the woods with Bear, as if it were her final good-bye.

As Snowpaw gazed into the starlight sky, she thought of Silverwhisker and Stonecloud as the stars winked at her.

The she-cats. Boy, she would miss them. Surely they would follow her wherever she went, right?

Guilt still filled her from those few sunrises ago when they had left her. But they would forgive her. They had to. They were StarClan! StarClan always forgave. Or that's what she had been taught.

Snowpaw yawned and realized how tired she was. With a sigh, she gazed up at the stars one last time, then settled down besides Bear. A light moan came from his mouth, but it only took the soft hum of Snowpaw's voice to make him fall asleep again.

Snowpaw rested her head near his as he fell into sleep.

Snowpaw dreamt she was back in the woods with her little plant that had not grown.

Snowpaw gazed around in the woods, pricking her ears for some type of sound.

"Hello? Hello?!" she called.

A sudden sound came from her plant, and when Snowpaw gazed down the plant lit into flames, a familiar laughter coming from it.

As Snowpaw gazed closer, she recognized the laughter as Bear's. Horrified, she ran away from the plant, Bear's laugh still following her.

Her bright forest was now lighting in flames, and Snowpaw was in tears as she ran through it, looking for a way to escape, Bear's laugher following her.

A burning tree fell down next to her, and a loud roar split through the air.

"WHAT IS GOING ON?!" Snowpaw screeched.

She let tears slide down her face as it began to rain, and the flames turned into ashes.

She looked up, seeing Silverwhisker and Stonecloud float nearby her.

Flashbacks filled Snowpaw's mind of her training sessions, all the fun, the laughter, but none of Bear.

"A loud roar," Silverwhisker spoke.

Suddenly, Snowpaw woke up. Bear stared feel into her eyes, and Snowpaw nearly screamed.

"Are you okay? You were moving around a lot in your sleep."

"Yeah, I'm fine," Snowpaw said nervously. But she wasn't. What had the message meant? She only knew one thing. She couldn't leave this forest. It was her home.

But Snowpaw knew she had no choice. She would have to go with Bear if she wanted to be happy. She promised to pay respect to the woods that had raised her the next day.

Chapter 19

Bear was already awake when Snowpaw woke up from her nightmares that had disturbed her all night. Something just hadn't felt right, and she felt like she had to stay in the forest, though she knew it would never happen.

Snowpaw stretched and dug her claws into the ground, letting out a large yawn as she padded over to Bear.

"Good morning. Anything you want to do today?" Bear asked.

"Actually, I'm going to spend the day in the woods by myself," Snowpaw said. "I'll see you in the evening."

Bear's face twisted into an odd look, but soon he turned away, allowing her to go into the woods.

Snowpaw padded into the woods, remembering the first time she had ever stumbled upon them so long ago. She wondered if Wavekit had ever really found her when she had been running, but she doubted that she had.

"Wavekit? Oceankit? Are you still alive?" she whispered. She hoped they were. Wavekit had tried to kill her, but Snowpaw wanted her alive so that she could successfully take Oceankit to her home.

Snowpaw passed by the ground where her plant had stood. It was gone now, only a brown withered leaf behind. Snowpaw let out a sigh, blowing the leaf into the air where it disappeared.

"I guess I'm just like that leaf," she said. "Disappearing from here..."

Snowpaw looked into the sky, wondering if Stonecloud and Silverwhisker could hear her. If they could, they probably would've just ignored her anyway. It wasn't like they were too happy with her at the moment.

Snowpaw continued walking through the woods, flashbacks of training flashing through her mind. She knew every nook and cranny of this place, and it felt wrong to leave when she hadn't finished training.

Her warrior name! Would she ever get it? Could she make one up? Could she just go by "Snow"? Snowpaw was unsure.

She noticed a young rabbit pouncing around on the forest floor. "Arch your back," she whispered, crouching down to catch it.

With a sudden pounce, she sprang upon the rabbit, landing on top of it. The rabbit squirmed under her and ran off. Snowpaw followed after it until she tripped on a stone, beginning to roll down a grassy hill.

Snowpaw didn't know why, but she began to laugh as she tumbled down. Once she reached the bottom, she smiled, still laughing. Brushing the grass and leaves off of her, she made her way back up the hill, her stomach growling.

But Snowpaw had known hunger before, and she knew that she could go a little longer before she ate.

As she reached the top, she heard a growl from behind her. She turned, seeing a ginger tabby tom who glowed dimly. At first she thought he was a StarClan cat, but the way he barely glowed showed that he was not.

"W-Who are you?" Snowpaw stammered, beginning to walk backwards.

The tom walked forward, and Snowpaw continued to walk backwards. Suddenly, her foot landed on top of a branch, and she fell over it, the tom coming face to face with her. Snowpaw nearly gagged at the stench of his breath. It reeked of blood.

"Don't be scared, my dear. Stand up," he breathed, his stench still holding strongly over Snowpaw.

Snowpaw slowly got up, growling at him. "Who are you?!"

"You don't recognize my scent?"

"All I can tell is that you reek of blood," Snowpaw growled back at him.

The tom towered over her, a malicious smile across his face. "It's the BloodClan scent," he laughed.

Snowpaw could've sworn that his eyes flashed red, the kind of evil that Silverwhisker had described seeing in her daugher.

"Who are you? You're dead, aren't you?"

"My name is Lightningstar, an old BloodClan leader. Shame to see a great warrior ditch her clan," he said, beginning to circle her.

"What do you want? BloodClan was a terrible clan. I watched a cat die before my eyes. My mother was made a nursery queen! Why do you think I'm a loss?! I'm a runt."

"Yes, you are. But BloodClan is what you are. Are you not

loyal? If your clan was to...be invaded...somehow, would you come back?"

"No, BloodClan gets into too much trouble. Wait, h-have they been invaded?" Snowpaw asked nervously.

"I don't know. Shouldn't you go find out?" he said.

"What happened to my family?!" Snowpaw hissed.

He let out a small evil laugh. "I knew you were still loyal. Let's just say your family was perhaps." He traced his claw over his throat, laughing.

"NO!" Snowpaw screeched. "You're lying."

"Perhaps, but I can still be telling the truth, can't I?"

"Maybe," Snowpaw hissed. "I'm not loyal to you or BloodClan."

"Come back to us," he grinned. "Maybe then you can find out what happened to your mother, your father, and your siblings."

Snowpaw leapt on top of the tom, growling at him. "DON'T YOU DARE HURT THEM!"

"Hurt them? They're my descendants. Why would I hurt my own clanmates who came after me? Look at you, Snowpaw. Already following the ways. It seems you could kill me right now."

Snowpaw's eyes widened, and she slowly got off of Lightningstar, allowing him to get back to his feet.

"Maybe we'll see each other again." He then vanished into darkness, leaving Snowpaw alone in the woods, petrified with fear.

"StarClan, please help me," she breathed, padding back into the forest.

It was still light out, and Snowpaw spent some time catching prey and standing next to the river while she thought.

Maybe Bear and her could stop by, just to make sure of course, that her family was okay. Snowpaw still didn't trust Lightningstar...

Snowpaw sighed and looked down at the pawprint her paw had made in the soil. She removed it, then looked at it. My, had she grown.

She laid down, resting her head on her paws, looking up at the sky. Clouds had begun to cover the sun, and Snowpaw felt anything but happy.

She knew it would begin to rain soon, so she glanced into the forest one last time, knowing this was the last time she would ever step foot into it. "Good-bye, forest," she said. "Thank you for

raising me. Thank you, Silverwhisker and Stonecloud."

She then turned her head and padded back into her camp, nearly crying as she left her home behind.

"There you are," Bear said. "I was wondering when you would return. We're still leaving tomorrow, right?"

"Bear, I don't think we can. I love it here. This is my home."

Bear looked at the ground for a second. Snowpaw wondered if he would just leave her. He had a life, and he probably didn't want to stay there.

"I'll stay," Bear replied.

"Y-You're serious?!"

"Yes. Anywhere you are, I'll be there," Bear purred.

Snowpaw smiled. "Thank you, Bear. It means a lot to me."

As the sky got darker, and the clouds fully covered the sky, Snowpaw laid down next to Bear, happiness overcoming her. She couldn't have asked for a better mate, and she wondered what adventures might happen the next day.

Chapter 20

Cold winds awoke Snowpaw in the morning, and Snowpaw looked up, seeing the clouds gather more. It was new-leaf. Why was it so cold?

Snowpaw turned, expecting to say good-morning to Bear, but she found him missing. Confused, Snowpaw sniffed the ground, picking up his scent. Stale.

"Bear?" she called.

She got up, sniffing the air for any scent of the tom. Where could he have gone? Hunting without her?

He was not in the camp, so he must've been in the forest. Snowpaw looked around the camp one last time, then disappeared into the woods. She could not detect his scent at all, for the wind was blowing it away.

"BEAR!" she called through the woods. The only response was the wind rustling through the branches.

Snowpaw felt herself getting stiff. What if something had happened to him? "BEAR!" she yelled once more.

She went by the river, not detecting any sign of her mate. She called for him, but there was no response. Snowpaw even went into the river, looking for the tom, but had found no signs.

Wet and cold, Snowpaw droopily went through the woods, calling out for Bear. Where had he gone?

There were no blood trails, no patches of hair, so he must've been okay, but she had no idea where he was.

Snowpaw's growling stomach did not stop her from looking. She searched in every nook and cranny, every hole, climbed every tree, looking for Bear. She would not stop until she found him, she

had promised herself that.

The only scents she had been able to pick up of him were stale, and when she tried to follow the scent trails, they seemed to disappear.

As the clouds gathered more quickly throughout the day, Snowpaw was exhausted. She wanted to lay down and sleep, but she could not rest. She had searched throughout the forest! Where could he have gone? Where could he be?

"BEAR?! WHERE ARE YOU?! THIS ISN'T FUNNY ANYMORE!" she screeched at the top of her lungs.

Her voice was hoarse now as she walked, and tears began to slide down her white face. Where was he?! Was he dead? *Oh, please don't be dead,* she thought.

So she continued to search. She searched until it got even darker, until the first raindrop began to fall down her pelt. But the raindrops had turned into hail, getting more fierce by the second. Snowpaw knew that she couldn't go much further.

Suddenly, she stood, a horrifying thought overcoming her. What if he had left...on purpose?! He had not seemed happy when she had told him yesterday that she wanted to stay. But he had loved her! That's what he had told her! How could he have left her?

What if it was all fake? What if Snowpaw had been a fool and fell for it? But all these clues that Snowpaw had been adding together had summed up to this explanation.

Snowpaw collapsed on the ground, the hail pounding against her body. "Was it all fake?!" she wailed. "I thought you loved me, Bear!" she yowled.

It was true. She believed it now. There was no other explanation. Bear had left her. That's why she had been so cold in the night.

He was a cruel monster who had stolen her heart, only to break it on *purpose.* With anger, Snowpaw trudged through the

forest, depression and sadness overcoming her.

What if her family truly was dead?! She had screwed up everything! She had fallen for a tom that had destroyed her, she had left her family that could be dying at that very moment, and now she would never see Silverwhisker and Stonecloud again.

Snowpaw just wished she was dead. She hated her life and everything in it. It was all her fault. She had caused the horrible mess she had made, and she didn't want to be apart of it anymore.

As she walked, the hail and wind nearly blinded her. "STUPID STARCLAN!" she hissed at the sky, a deep depression flowing inside of her.

She laid down by a rock that offered a small amount of protection, and she began to cry. She cried and wailed until darkness nearly covered all of the forest. The hail was gone, so was the wind, and only drops of rain remained.

Snowpaw looked up, tears streaming down her face. But suddenly, she noticed something. She began to walk towards it, getting closer and closer.

She was staring face to face with ripe, red holly berries. Should she do it? Snowpaw didn't know. She was feeling so alone and angry.

She hesitated, then plucked one off.

She remembered Stonecloud telling her they were dangerous and could even kill.

"Perfect," Snowpaw whispered.

She sat down, looking up at the sky. Placing her claw in the berry, she lifted it over her mouth. "Good-bye, stupid world," she hissed.

She suddenly saw the pale eyes of Silverwhisker, and the white pelt of Stonecloud, staring at her from several pawsteps.

"SNOWPAW! NO!" Silverwhisker hissed, just as the berry slid past Snowpaw's mouth.

Chapter 21

Nightmares swirled through Snowpaw's mind for what felt like an eternity. It was always the same dream, repeating over and over, but Snowpaw wouldn't wake up.

Snowpaw would stand in a dark forest, trees shrouding over her. The only light was faint, and it came from the full moon up above. Snowpaw would stand, frigid and cold, then she would spot two large paws, smell a familiar scent, and she would notice a thick brown pelt. Then she would hear the roar that would chase her. She would begin to run, and the roar would follow her.

This nightmare was different though. As Snowpaw kept running and the roar kept following her, she swore that she saw light coming from the other end of the woods. She continued running, faster, faster, the animal almost catching up to her. She suddenly gasped as she saw Bear, and that's what she realized. Bear, a bear! That's what Silverwhisker had described! StarClan had warned her all along, and like a fool, Snowpaw hadn't noticed.

The light was only a few more pawsteps away. Knowing she couldn't run much longer, she leapt into the light, a flash exploding.

When Snowpaw did open her eyes, she wasn't in the dark forest anymore. She was lying on the ground of the familiar forest. Her body felt sore, and she looked around, spotting Silverwhisker and Stonecloud.

"A-am I dead?" Snowpaw asked.

"She's alive!" Silverwhisker suddenly gasped.

"W-what happened?" Snowpaw asked, slowly getting up from a nest of straw that the she-cats had made for her.

"After you ate the holly berry, you passed out," Stonecloud explained. "We've been tending to you for awhile now. Seven sunrises. We weren't allowed to use our healing powers of StarClan on you, so we've been hoping you would awake."

"I didn't die?"

"At first we thought you would," Silverwhisker explained. "But you miraculously recovered."

"I'm sorry. I'm so terribly sorry," Snowpaw began. "You two

were warning me all along about Bear, and I didn't know. I know he used me now, and I know it was stupid to try to kill myself. I'm sorry I led you away from me. I want to be a warrior, I truly do, but I think it's too late for apologies now."

"It's never too late," Stonecloud said softly. "We would love to continue your training, but you can't run off with a tom this time."

Snowpaw sighed. "Believe me, I don't think I'll ever love another cat again."

"Just because Bear was a fraud doesn't mean that every other cat is," Silverwhisker explained. "But know that StarClan is watching over you always, and we never leave your side."

"I'm sorry I didn't believe that too," Snowpaw spoke. "Silverwhisker, Stonecloud, will you mentor me again so I can complete my training?"

"Of course," they both said in unison.

"You'll want to rest though," Stonecloud said. "You've been unconscious for several days. Silverwhisker will go get you some prey and water. I'll stay here."

"Thank you," Snowpaw said.

As Silverwhisker went off, Snowpaw lightly traced patterns in the soil. "I can't believe I tried to kill myself," she mumbled.

"But it's important that you're alive now," Stonecloud spoke softly.

"Stonecloud, what happened to my family?" Snowpaw asked.

"I can't tell you, for it is something that you must find out on your own. When the time comes, we'll tell you some, but just enough to help you find them."

Snowpaw sighed. The exact answer she expected. StarClan would never tell her where her family was, but then again, StarClan had told her what Bear really was. She wished she could read symbols better.

Silverwhisker arrived back quickly with a squirrel and some moss. Famished, Snowpaw quickly ate up the squirrel, then drank the water, feeling refreshed as the cool, icy water slid down her throat.

"Stonecloud, I know about Silverwhisker's past, but what about yours?"

"That is something that we do not need to go over,"

Stonecloud grumbled. "Maybe you'll hear about it one day."

Snowpaw knew that the questions should come to a stop then. If Stonecloud was anything like Silverwhisker was when it came to the past, Snowpaw decided to steer clear.

After Snowpaw ate yet another squirrel, she was able to get up and pad around, stretching her sore muscles that had not moved in days.

By the evening, she felt like she could take on anything, though sadness flooded through her as she thought of her and Bear in the evening...If only it had all been true. But she obviously wasn't destined to be with Bear, but probably another tom. Snowpaw would wait for that tom.

What if I'm not destined to be with any tom at all? Snowpaw thought. She shook the thought away. No, it couldn't be true.

"Can I go hunting?" Snowpaw asked Stonecloud.

"Are you sure you want to?" Stonecloud asked.

Snowpaw nodded.

Together, the two white she-cats padded into the woods that were dimly-lit due to the setting sun. Snowpaw quickly smelled the scent of a rabbit which she spotted by a nearby tree. Crouching down, she slowly stalked forward, then leapt.

The rabbit landed in her paws, and Snowpaw quickly killed it. She was glad to be back and learning hunting like she had done not too long ago.

"Great catch," Stonecloud said, "though I would've leapt a little later. That rabbit nearly escaped."

"Thanks," Snowpaw said, biting into the rabbit.

She would've usually shared the prey with Bear, and right now, she probably would've been scared alone, for she would've thought a roar would come. But there would be no bears or roars anymore because Snowpaw had known the truth now, and no nightmares would come over her.

She spent the remainder of the evening hunting with Stonecloud, something she had rarely done since Silverwhisker usually taught her hunting.

As the stars began to shine, Snowpaw and Stonecloud headed back to the camp where Snowpaw padded into her hollow log.

She had missed the log, and she had missed her camp. It had felt so good to be back.

Spotting a brown hair, she flicked it away, hissing. Bear wouldn't be seen anymore, and she didn't want to be reminded of him.

Curling up inside, she closed her eyes and slept.

Snowpaw did not have nightmares, but she instead dreamt. She dreamt about Icekit, Flightkit, her father, her mother. They all called for her. "Snowpaw! We've missed you!" they would call.

"You do? I miss you too!"

"Come back to us! Come back!" they wailed.

"I-I can't. I'm training, but I'll come back soon. I promise."

The faces of her family were depressed and Snowpaw quickly awoke from her dream. It wasn't real obviously, but Snowpaw had felt like it was. Maybe she should go back and look for them, after training.

Suddenly, Snowpaw realized something. What would happen after training? Would Stonecloud and Silverwhisker stay with her? Snowpaw didn't think they would. Suddenly, she had become terribly scared of surviving without the two she-cats at her side. She was scared to be alone, just like she had been so long ago. She was scared of being abandoned.

Chapter 22

A few sunrises had passed since Snowpaw had awoke from her coma that had trapped her in endless nightmares. No more nightmares had surfaced since, but Snowpaw still had a spark of hope that maybe, just maybe, Bear would show back up and that it hadn't been fake.

But she knew it was fake, and StarClan had warned her, and she had so foolishly ignored the message they had tried to present.

As for other news, she had been trying her best on training, and in the next few sunrises, she would be having her exam, judging whether or not she should be made a warrior.

Snowpaw was nervous, no doubt. But not for becoming a warrior. She was scared what would happen when Stonecloud and Silverwhisker left her, though she tried to keep her mind away from that and focus on her training.

She mastered nearly every skill now-hunting, fighting, herbs, it was all covered. Now it was basically just review for her.

She started off the day with Stonecloud as always. Now that it was no longer leaf-bare and plants abounded in the forest, Stonecloud no longer had to perform her powers to allow Snowpaw to see the plants.

"Are we learning any new herbs today?" Snowpaw asked.

Stonecloud shook her head. "It's just a review. You've learned all of them, Snowpaw. Now," she said, stopping by a green plant that produced bright, purple flowers. "What plant is this?"

"Lavender," Snowpaw quickly replied.

"And it's good for?"

"Fever and chills," Snowpaw replied.

"Good," Stonecloud replied, moving on. After walking for awhile, Stonecloud stopped at a bright green leaf. "This is..."

"An ivy leaf," Snowpaw replied.

"What is it good for?"

Snowpaw had to ponder for a moment. She hadn't gone over this leaf for awhile. After a few seconds of going over herbs in her head, she replied, "There is no effect that it brings. It's to store herbs."

"Very good, Snowpaw," Stonecloud replied. "I really have taught you well."

Stonecloud walked further, stopping at yet another plant. It had a green stem, a yellow flower sprouting on the top.

"And this is?"

"A dandelion, of course," Snowpaw replied.

"And what is it good for?"

"Coughs," Snowpaw replied.

Stonecloud shook her head. "No, Snowpaw. The white liquid of a dandelion can soothe and heal bee stings. The leaves, when chewed, can act as a painkiller."

"Oh, sorry. I forgot," Snowpaw sighed. She never usually got herbs wrong, but she knew she had to stay focused since her exam would be soon.

"We'll do one more," Stonecloud said. "Follow me."

Snowpaw followed the blissful, white she-cat farther into the woods. Familiar scents flooded around Snowpaw, and she gazed around, trying to think which plant would be presented to her next.

Stonecloud suddenly came to a halt, stopping at a bush with ripe, red, and round berries. Snowpaw stood in fear, nearly screeching as she came face to face with the berries.

Stonecloud did not even have to ask what herbs these were. "These are holly berries," Snowpaw whispered.

"And they're good for."

"Nothing," Snowpaw whimpered. "But they can kill..." It was as if all her nightmares and memories had come back at once just gazing into the red gleam of the berries. All she could remember was Bear and the horrible moment when Snowpaw had realized he left on purpose. The horrible moment when she so foolishly slipped those berries into her mouth, trapping her in darkness.

"C-can we leave now?" Snowpaw asked.

"Yes," Stonecloud replied, leading Snowpaw away from the berries that held the dark past inside.

Snowpaw could not focus the entire way back to the camp, for the vision of the berries in her mind stuck, and it was as if they would never leave her mind.

Finally, they arrived back into the small camp, Silverwhisker purring as they entered.

"How was it?" the silver she-cat asked.

"Fine," Snowpaw solemnly replied.

"Almost all of her herbs are memorized," Stonecloud said. "But there are a few that she really does know very well..."

The holly berries. She means the holly berries, Snowpaw thought.

"Well, are we ready to begin our hunting review?" Silverwhisker asked.

"Sure," Snowpaw replied.

She padded away with Silverwhisker, tempted to tell her all about the berries, but she kept her mouth shut, knowing that Silverwhisker probably already knew about them. She was from StarClan and all.

Into the forest they padded, and no sooner did they enter, a rabbit raced by. Snowpaw leapt after it, leaving Silverwhisker behind. She kept running, chasing the rabbit through the forest, until she came to a halt, stopping in front of a large, menacing gray tabby she-cat.

The large she-cat gazed over her, darkness forming all around her. This was no normal cat. It was a cat from the Dark Forest.

Wide-eyed, Snowpaw left the rabbit, and scampered away, looking behind to see no cat following. As she kept running, she stopped, noticing that the she-cat was gone, and it was as if she was never there.

She returned back to Silverwhisker with no prey, but she was just thankful the Dark Forest she-cat had not done anything to her.

"Are you okay?" Silverwhisker asked. "You look shaken up."

"Fine," Snowpaw replied. "I couldn't catch the rabbit, but there should be more prey around."

Silverwhisker nodded. "Let's try through those bushes over there."

Snowpaw nodded, following her mentor through some bright green bushes. Light-colored flowers had begun to sprout from the leaves, and for once, something like that calmed Snowpaw.

They entered into more forest territory, and Snowpaw immediately began to smell a squirrel. She looked up, noticing it by a nearby tree.

Tree-climbing wasn't exactly her thing, but Bear had always been there to catch her if she fell. She shook her head, trying to clear her mind of the tom whom she would probably kill if she saw

him again. Silverwhisker was here to catch her now, and Snowpaw began to climb up the tree, the squirrel only a grasp away.

As she steadied herself on the first branch, she suddenly lashed her claw out, killing the squirrel quickly. Hanging limp in her claws, the picked up the squirrel with her mouth, then gently climbed down the tree.

"Good catch," Silverwhisker congratulated her. "You'll do great when your exam comes."

"You think so?" Snowpaw asked.

Silverwhisker nodded.

For the rest of the time, Silverwhisker and Snowpaw padded around the forest, catching prey and reviewing hunting techniques that would be useful to Snowpaw.

By the time they had finished hunting, they had come back with three squirrels and two birds, a large amount of food that could keep Snowpaw full for a few days. It was as if green-leaf had come early in the forest.

Stonecloud gaped as she saw the two carrying all the prey in. "Well, you two must have gotten a lot!"

Snowpaw nodded and smiled. "I'm totally going to pass this exam!"

"We'll see," Stonecloud said.

Snowpaw was confused. Had Stonecloud doubted her? Surely she would pass it, wouldn't she? She was good at all the herbs and prey. What else did she need to know.

"We need to test out your fighting skills," Stonecloud announced.

"I totally forgot!" Silverwhisker admitted. "Alright, Snowpaw. I'll launch at you, and you dodge me, okay?"

"Mouse-dung!" Stonecloud spat. "In a real battle, she won't know what the other cat will do. You can't tell her that anymore, Silverwhisker. Alright, Snowpaw. Face me."

"O-okay," Snowpaw said.

She leapt at Stonecloud, just catching her tail. Pinning the white she-cat's tail down, Snowpaw climbed up on top of her, pinning her down.

"That was a nice start," Stonecloud said. "But I'm sure cats can easily slip away if you hold their tail down. Try again."

Snowpaw nodded, and before she could move, Stonecloud leapt at her. Snowpaw crouched down, Stonecloud flying over her.

Snowpaw then turned and leapt, knocking Stonecloud onto the ground. Dirt flew up in the air as she landed, and Snowpaw stood on top of Stonecloud proudly.

Suddenly, Stonecloud flew her off, making Snowpaw fly into the dirt. Quickly getting up, she turned and faced Stonecloud, then leapt again.

"Enough!" Stonecloud said, calling it off.

"How'd I do?" Snowpaw asked.

"Very good," Stonecloud said. "But try to be a little faster next time. I think we're good for review for the day. Why don't you eat something and head off to bed?"

Snowpaw nodded, grabbing one of her squirrels from the fresh kill pile that she and Silverwhisker had made after their hunt. Eating it slowly, she sat, looking up at the sky as the pink and orange wisps were strung across it. The clouds slowly moved with the light wind, and Snowpaw smiled.

Finishing her squirrel, the sky had begun to turn indigo, and Snowpaw curled up in her log, her feathery tail curling up around her nose. She then closed her eyes and slept.

Chapter 23

Snowpaw woke up both nervous and excited for the events that would take place on this day. She padded out of the log that she could barely squeeze into now. Yawning, she stretched, eating a squirrel to keep up her energy.

Today was her exam for becoming a warrior. She had to pass or else she would continue to train, though she didn't mind having the two StarClan cats look after her a little longer. Snowpaw knew she was independent now and needed to grow up on her own. She wasn't a kit anymore.

For the past sunrises, they had reviewed, and Snowpaw had nailed everything exact. She knew she was prepared, but she didn't know what would lie ahead of her after this. Would she stay in the forest? Find Bear and get revenge? No, that was a stupid idea. What if she found new love? It was a weird thought, but Snowpaw thought she was getting ready to attempt to find someone new.

Suddenly, Silverwhisker and Stonecloud appeared beside her.

"Good morning," Stonecloud spoke, watching Snowpaw eat the squirrel. "Are you ready for today?"

"I believe so, Stonecloud," Snowpaw spoke.

"I can't believe you've grown up so fast," Silverwhisker spoke. "You were just a tiny kit when we found you."

"Not exactly. I was apprentice age."

"Who do you think left you the food and water when you were about to die? Who do you think led you to Wavekit and Oceankit?"

"StarClan. Wait, that was you two?"

"We are a part of StarClan," Stonecloud smiled. "We were assigned to guide you, Snowkit. Well, I was, and then Silverwhisker was my help. Now, are you ready to begin?"

Snowpaw gulped. "I think so."

"Good," Silverwhisker said. "Follow us."

Snowpaw followed the star-lit she-cats into the forest, the sun shining brightly up above. Snowpaw knew that no snow would fall anymore, and the snow would not return until next leaf-bare.

Maybe she would have a mate and kits by then. Maybe she would be in a clan. She didn't know.

Silverwhisker and Stonecloud stopped in a clearing where the sunlight shone brightly in it. A line of plants spread throughout the clearing, and Snowpaw knew this would be the herb part of the test.

"Now, this is a very big exam," Silverwhisker explained. "First, you'll be tested on half of the herbs you know. Then, you'll go hunt as much as you can. You'll return, finishing the second half of the herbs, then you'll battle. It will take all day, so get started now!"

Snowpaw padded towards Stonecloud, waiting for the she-cat to point to the first plant. "You choose where to start," she explained.

Snowpaw nodded. "Alright," she said, starting at the right side of the line. She began to list herbs to Stonecloud. "Burdock root, alder bark, blackberry leaves, wintergreen, yarrow..." The list continued on and on until Snowpaw got to the end of the line. No poisonous herbs were in the line, and Snowpaw knew they would be when she returned. Obviously, Stonecloud was just starting her out easy.

Snowpaw looked up at Stonecloud, waiting for a score. "You got every one right," Stonecloud spoke. "Great job!"

Snowpaw did not have much time to celebrate though, for the morning sun had fully risen now.

"Go hunt now!" Silverwhisker spoke.

Snowpaw nodded, running into the woods as she kept her ears pricked for prey. She was afraid to see the Dark Forest she-cat she had seen earlier, but she had to finish this exam if she wanted to be a warrior.

Suddenly, Snowpaw looked up, spotting a few birds in a tree. Snowpaw slowly grasped her claws on the bark, climbing up the tree slowly, careful not to scare away the birds. As she got to the branch, she leapt, catching a bird in her claw. The other two began to fly, and Snowpaw was able to injure one's wing, the other one escaping.

The one with the injured wing landed on a branch below, and Snowpaw slowly crept down, catching the other one. With two birds in her mouth, Snowpaw knew this would be a successful day.

She crawled down to the ground, burying the two birds in the soil. Covering the hole up, she went farther into the forest,

looking for other prey to catch.

Time passed slowly, and Snowpaw could not find anymore prey. It was then she spotted a hole. Snowpaw was unsure whether or not it was a mouse or rabbit hole. Silverwhisker had probably told her, but Snowpaw had to memorize herbs more than holes, for she wouldn't be tested on it.

Snowpaw slowly crept by the hole, sticking a claw in. She jumped on the hole, and suddenly a rabbit scurried out, running into the forest. Snowpaw quickly ran after it, beginning to run into the meadow that laid in the forest.

She knew she could not chase the rabbit forever, so she leapt, catching it. With the dead rabbit in her mouth, she took it back into the forest where she buried it. She knew she didn't need much more prey now, so she continued to look through parts of the forest.

As the afternoon settled in, Snowpaw had caught a squirrel and two mice as well. Knowing there was not much prey now, Snowpaw spoke, "I'm done."

In a flash, Stonecloud and Silverwhisker appeared. "Alright. Show us what you've got," Silverwhisker spoke.

Snowpaw first padded towards the nearest hole that held the two mice. She uncovered it, finding the mice she had caught. Thank StarClan no other animal had gotten to it.

Silverwhisker and Stonecloud stared at each other then nodded, each of them taking a mouse for themselves. Snowpaw then realized she was near the birds. She scented the hole, finding two birds inside.

I must be really good at concealing the prey, she thought, remembering her early training where foxes would get it.

Another nod of approval from Stonecloud and Silverwhisker came. Snowpaw continued to show them the rest of the holes, and after she was done, Silverwhisker spoke. "I have trained you well, Snowpaw. You've caught copious amounts of prey. Now, come. You've got to finish herbs, and then fighting."

Snowpaw nodded, following the she-cats back into the clearing where new plants were lined up. Snowpaw could already spot the ripe, red holly berries. She shivered at the sight of them.

Snowpaw decided to start as far away as she could from the berries. Starting on the other side, she began to list the herbs. "Horsetail, cobwebs, poppy seeds..." Then she got to the ripe, red

berries that stood in front of her.

Snowpaw gulped. "Holly berries. They are poisonous, and they sometimes kill. Sometimes," she spoke.

Trying to keep the berries out of her mind, she continued until she reached the end of the line.

"Another perfect score!" Stonecloud spoke. "Congratulations, Snowpaw."

"It's time to fight now. This will be your last test, Snowpaw," Silverwhisker spoke. "You will first fight each of us individually, then together."

Snowpaw nodded. "Who will I fight first?"

"Me," Silverwhisker spoke.

Before she even spoke 'begin', Snowpaw leapt at the silver she-cat, knocking her down quickly. Silverwhisker quickly threw her off, facing her. The two charged at each other, Snowpaw leaping over Silverwhisker as she ran. Silverwhisker then attacked her from behind, though Snowpaw was able to throw her off.

The two circled each other for awhile before Snowpaw leapt under her, knocking her over. She then stood on top of Silverwhisker, smiling. Silverwhisker struggled underneath her, but could not get off.

"Very good," Silverwhisker said. "But now you have Stonecloud to fight."

Snowpaw caught her breath, then faced Stonecloud. The white she-cat gazed at her, ready to fight. Snowpaw knew she had to beat Stonecloud. Even though she was tough, Snowpaw's warrior name depended on it.

Stonecloud leapt before Snowpaw did, already holding Snowpaw down. Snowpaw then clawed at her belly, Stonecloud jumping off. Snowpaw then leapt at Stonecloud. The she-cat dodged her though, and Snowpaw leapt quickly this time, knocking into her. She then knocked Stonecloud over, pinning her down.

"Good, good," Stonecloud spoke. "That's the best I've seen you do, Snowpaw."

Snowpaw felt overcome with joy at these words. She got off of Stonecloud, letting her get up to stand by Silverwhisker.

"Are you ready to fight both of us?" Stonecloud asked.

Snowpaw nodded. Suddenly, Silverwhisker leapt from behind her, knocking Snowpaw on her back. Snowpaw turned, pushing her off, only to see Stonecloud coming from the corner of

her eye.

Snowpaw jumped up, Silverwhisker and Stonecloud running into each other. Snowpaw then pinned down Stonecloud, knowing she would be the larger problem. Silverwhisker charged behind her, but Snowpaw ducked as she did so.

Silverwhisker landed on the other side of her, and Snowpaw let go of the struggling Stonecloud. Stonecloud seemed to have given up though, watching as Snowpaw attacked Silverwhisker, knocking her to the ground as well.

Silverwhisker slid underneath her, though Snowpaw grabbed her tail, leaping up on the she-cat again to knock her down. This pattern continued until Silverwhisker was nearly out of breath.

"Alright, alright. I give up. Stonecloud, it's time to decide."

Snowpaw watched as the two then padded off to speak, occasionally glancing back at Snowpaw.

Finally, the two padded back towards Snowpaw. "We've made a decision," Silverwhisker announced.

Snowpaw realized she was shaking with nervousness as the two stared at her. Stonecloud then smiled. "Are you ready to receive your warrior name, Snowpaw?"

Chapter 24

"I passed?" Snowpaw gasped.

Silverwhisker and Stonecloud nodded, and Snowpaw couldn't help but bounce up and down in excitement. She couldn't believe it! She was going to be a warrior!

The two quickly padded back towards the camp where Snowpaw would receive her warrior name, where she would continue off on her own, where she would become independent.

As they headed back to camp, everything seemed entirely different. This might be the last night that Snowpaw would spend in the forest. It might now. Snowpaw wasn't sure. It was only the afternoon now, and she knew that evening would come upon them soon.

She watched as Stonecloud padded up the small rock in the camp. Snowpaw remembered when she had become an apprentice on that rock. She missed those days.

"Snowpaw, please come up," Stonecloud said.

Smiling, Snowpaw began to walk up the rock, though it seemed much smaller than when she was becoming an apprentice.

"Snowpaw, you've been through a lot, and StarClan has been there to help you. For moons, we've trained you to become the best warrior you can be, and both Silverwhisker and I are very proud of you. I call upon my warrior ancestors to look upon this apprentice. She has trained hard to follow your ways, and in return, I shall make her a warrior. Snowpaw, from this day forward, you shall be called—"

"Wait!" Snowpaw screeched.

Stonecloud suddenly stopped. "What?"

"Do you mind if I choose my own warrior name?"

Stonecloud gazed at Silverwhisker in confusion. Snowpaw watched as Silverwhisker gave a nod. Stonecloud then turned back to Snowpaw. "Very well," she spoke.

"I would like to be called Snowfeather, in honor of my mother."

Stonecloud nodded. "Very well. From this day forward, you shall be called Snowfeather in honor of the mother who guarded and protected you as a kit."

This time, it sounded like all of StarClan was cheering her name instead of just Stonecloud and Silverwhisker. "SNOWFEATHER! SNOWFEATHER!" they cheered.

Snowfeather smiled, stepping down from the rock. Was this where they would say their good-bye's now? She wasn't sure.

"Are you leaving now?" Snowfeather asked.

Stonecloud and Silverwhisker exchanged glances. "No, not yet. We have to present some things to you first."

"About what?" Snowfeather asked.

"Your family," Silverwhisker spoke.

Snowfeather stiffened. She had waited moons for this, but now she was scared about what they would say. "What has happened to my family?"

"Perhaps, you should watch instead," Silverwhisker spoke. "Follow us to the pool in which you watch all the events that have taken place."

Snowfeather nodded, following the two StarClan cats back into the forest where they came to a pool that Snowfeather had never even noticed in the forest.

"Look inside," Stonecloud spoke. "We will only show you all

that is necessary."

Snowfeather gulped and nodded, glancing into the water. An image soon came into view of her father, Whiteclaw. He padded into the forest, the medicine cat apprentice, Tinypaw, padding next to him.

She must've become the medicine cat, Snowfeather guessed, seeing that the she-cat had grown some.

"How much longer, Tinyblaze?" Whiteclaw asked.

"It is a longer walk, Whitestar. You've already gone to the stone that gives you your lives, now have patience as you return. The clan will not be expecting you until tomorrow."

Whitestar groaned. "I don't want to wait," he growled.

Such stubbornness, Snowfeather thought. She remembered that of her father.

As they walked, leaves flew up in the air, and it was as if there was a hissing noise. All Snowfeather could spot were bright red eyes.

"I hear something," Whitestar spat.

Tinyblaze stopped. "What? What do you hear?"

Suddenly, a thin, silver-blue she-cat padded forward, her eyes a bright green. Tinyblaze crouched down, afraid of the she-cat who looked malicious.

"What? What do you want?!" Whitestar spat.

The she-cat gazed at the tom. "My name is Moonstar."

"How did you find us?" Whitestar growled. "No one has ever found BloodClan before. Tinyblaze, seize her. Poppypaw and Strikepaw are becoming warriors soon, aren't they? This could be a good offering."

Tinyblaze padded towards her, though Moonstar leapt over her. Snowfeather realized how evil this she-cat was. Suddenly, she realized that this was Silverwhisker's kit, Moonstar! This was the murderous she-cat!

Snowfeather wished she could've been there to warn her father, but all she could do was watch.

"Perhaps, we can work out a day," she purred. "You're obviously the new leader, are you not?"

"I am," Whitestar growled. "Scram before I murder you."

"That won't be necessary," she laughed, pinning the tom down. She lightly traced a claw over his throat. "It would be a shame to kill the leader of such a good clan, wouldn't it?"

"Who are you?" Whitestar hissed.

Snowfeather didn't want to look. She didn't want to see Moonstar murder her father.

"I've told you already. I'm Moonstar, leader of MoonClan," she hissed, her eyes glowing that familiar red that Silverwhisker had described. "We're growing a clan, and we're planning to kill out two clans and take over a large forest. We're in need of members."

"I've told you already, she-cat!" Whitestar hissed, attempting to throw her off. "I already own this forest."

Moonstar brought her claws down closer to Whitestar's throat. "Yes, maybe. Do you have a family? Maybe they could join as well. You could be my trustful deputy, perhaps."

"Deputy?" Whitestar asked.

"Yes, a great idea!" Moonstar spoke. "And you could rule the forest with me."

"No," Snowfeather breathed. She could tell her father was finding this deal interesting.

"Alright, I'll be your deputy. If you could please get off of me," Whitestar spoke.

Moonstar got off of the tom. "Meet me back here tomorrow night with your family. Then you can come to the clan, perhaps."

"Yes," Whitestar spoke. "I shall."

"Whitestar, sir! You're already running a clan," Tinyblaze spoke.

"Quiet, medicine cat," Whitestar hissed.

The water rippled, showing another scene of Whitestar on top of the familiar rock in BloodClan, gazing down at the bloodthirsty cats. Snowfeather noticed Pollenkit among them, but he looked like an apprentice now.

"CATS OF BLOODCLAN! I AM LEAVING THIS CLAN!"

Mrrowls of disagreement arose from the crowd. Snowfeather spotted her brother and sister next to Snowfeather, looking down.

"To MoonClan we will go! And Briarstorm, you shall be the new leader!" he yowled.

Snowfeather hissed. Briarstorm. The abusing she-cat who had yowled at her mother. Though Snowfeather felt a pang of sorrow for her as she remembered that she had killed Briarstorm's mate.

The water rippled once more, this time showing Snowfeather's entire family in front of Moonstar as they padded to the camp. Snowfeather wanted to cry. She couldn't believe her family had fallen under the power of Moonstar.

They arrived in a small camp. There were only a few cats, and Snowfeather heard mews of kits, and saw a muscular brown tabby tom who stared at them.

"Now, you can change your names if you wish to," Moonstar

spoke. "Names such as Flightpaw and Icepaw, well, they aren't that deadly."

"I'd like to be called Bone," Whitestar spat.

Flightpaw smiled. "And I want to be called Tooth!"

No, no, this isn't happening, Snowfeather thought as she watched this.

Icepaw seemed hesitant about this idea. "I'll just be called Ice." Now Snowfeather looked up, spotting her mother. "I will remain Snowfeather."

Moonstar seemed displeased with this decision, but she did not say anything about it. The sound of kits mewing became louder, and Snowfeather pricked her ears.

"Are those kits?" she asked.

Moonstar nodded. "Four of mine, actually."

"May I watch them?"

Moonstar smiled. She seemed to like the idea of this. "Of course." Snowfeather watched as her mother padded into the nursery that held four small kits. Snowfeather could not believe Moonstar had left her kits alone.

Snowfeather wanted to cry as her mother gently whispered to them, calming the kits down. None of them looked like Moonstar, most of them looking like the brown tabby tom who was most likely Moonstar's mate.

The scene changed, this time showing more and more members within the MoonClan camp. Tooth and Ice had grown, and Snowfeather noticed Ice talking to an older gray tom who was probably her mate.

Snowfeather's mother still watched after Moonstar's kits some, but once Snowfeather heard their apprentice names, she was confused. The kits still looked nothing more than three moons. How

could Moonstar do that to these kits?

Snowfeather watched as some MoonClan cats carried in an unconscious black tom, throwing him into an empty den.

"Perfect. You've captured him," Moonstar laughed.

Who was this tom? Why did Moonstar capture him? It was unknown. Moonstar gazed down at her four kits. Two seemed excited, though two seemed to be scared of their mother. "Bone, why don't you put Chesnutpaw and Hazelpaw in with Blackpaw?"

Bone nodded, and the kits screeched as he threw them in the guarded den. Snowfeather watched the face of her mother as she saw this. It was a look of concern and heartbreak.

The water rippled once more, this time showing Snowfeather's mother help Blackpaw, Chesnutpaw, and Hazelpaw out of the den. She was helping them escape.

"Go, mother," Snowfeather whispered, proud of her mother.

There was a yowl that they had escaped, and she watched Moonstar glare at her mother, and suddenly, Snowfeather gulped, afraid of what would happen next.

The scene changed again, this time showing Snowfeather, Moonstar, and a dark ginger she-cat in the forest. Suddenly, Snowfeather watched as Moonstar and the dark ginger she-cat pounced on her mother.

"NO!" Snowfeather screeched.

Snowfeather pawed at the water until the scene vanished, then she looked back up at Stonecloud and Silverwhisker.

"Your daughter is evil!" Snowfeather screeched at Silverwhisker. "She killed my mother!"

"I'm sorry, but she is no longer in my control," Silverwhisker spoke.

"There is still hope, Snowfeather. For your family. The battle is over now. MoonClan has lost. Your father, brother, and sister are all still alive at this moment. Snowfeather, we are going to leave you, but your job is to go to MoonClan and find them."

"Me? Go to MoonClan? Where do I even start?" Snowfeather asked.

"You will know. We also have a power to give you, Snowfeather," Stonecloud spoke.

"Power? What power? I need a power?"

Stonecloud spoke softly. "With these powers of StarClan, I give you the ability to float as mist to hide from your enemies and to guide you."

"What the?" Suddenly, a large bit of mist flew over Snowfeather, and when she opened her eyes, she felt the exact same.

"Wow!" Silverwhisker gasped.

"What?" Suddenly, Snowfeather looked down at her paws, though she did not have any. She was mist. She then screeched. "What is this?! How do I turn back?"

"All you have to do is think," Stonecloud spoke. "Worrying won't help."

Snowfeather concentrated, feeling her body change slightly. When she looked down this time, she had paws and was back to normal.

"You can hide from enemies with this, or do anything else with it. You'll need to learn how to control it though," Silverwhisker spoke.

"Thank you," Snowfeather replied.

"We must be leaving now," Stonecloud spoke. "Use your powerrs. Find MoonClan."

"I will," Snowfeather replied. "I really will."

Silverwhisker and Stonecloud both smiled, then slowly faded, and Snowfeather knew it would be the last time she ever saw the she-cats.

I wanted to address the concerns that Snowfeather's name will be too confusing since I have received multiple comments about this. The fact that they have the same name is deliberate and is what led me to create this story, so I'm not going to change it. In future chapters, I really do work hard to make sure there is no confusion, always referring to the elder Snowfeather as "mother, her mother, etc." No one seems to comment about this confusion in chapters past this one, so I hope you will trust me here when I say it's not that big of a deal.

Chapter 25

Snowfeather stood in complete awe. It felt as if she would never be able to move her feet again, actually. She had just discovered so much in the past few minutes.

She let out a cry, then slumped to the ground. Her mother, her brilliant mother, was dead, for she had died under Moonstar's reign. Snowfeather wanted to kill Moonstar if she ever found her. Although Snowfeather knew MoonClan had been defeated, she was unaware if Moonstar had died.

But then, Snowfeather was confused. If her mother had not died that night so long ago in the woods, why had she left Snowfeather all alone? Then Snowfeather stopped. Why had she not realized it all along?

Her mother and father's arguments with Blackstar, her mother's horrified face, the word "exile". It all made sense. Snowfeather had been exiled at four and a half moons from BloodClan. That's why her mother left her. Still, Snowfeather didn't understand why her mother couldn't have left BloodClan as well and stayed with her.

Snowfeather sighed, tracing her paw in the dirt. Her mother cared too much about Whiteclaw, Flightkit, and Icekit, or better now known as Bone, Tooth, and Ice. Snowfeather would find them though. She would.

She decided to stay one more night in her camp before she went on her journey to find MoonClan. She needed rest, and she wasn't completely sure about how to use her powers yet.

It seemed confusing, the mist. Snowfeather concentrated, thinking about the cool brush of mist that would spread over the forest. Opening her eyes, Snowfeather realized she was mist again,

lightly flowing over the camp.

Snowfeather began to panic now, thinking of herself as a cat again, though when she opened her eyes, she was still mist.

"Oh no," she cried. "This isn't good."

She kept thinking about her soft, white paws and pointed ears. Her whiskers and ocean blue eyes.

She was relieved to see paws this time touching the bottom of the forest. She had to learn how to control this better. She couldn't show this to any cat either. They might've thought the Dark Forest did this to her, or some cats might've thought she was a StarClan cat. Snowfeather had to keep her power a secret though.

Snowfeather now wondered about her family. Did Ice have a mate and kits? What about Tooth? And Bone, her father? Did he even care that his mate was now dead? Snowfeather was unsure.

Snowfeather sighed, crawling into the small log. She curled her feathery tail around her nose, though it took awhile for sleep to come. She was terribly confused, and though StarClan had not told her a lot, she knew they hadn't told her all.

Closing her blue eyes, she breathed in deeply, falling asleep.

Snowfeather awoke to early morning, hearing the familiar sound of birds chirping. She got out of her log, knowing it would be the last time she ever slept in it.

She decided to eat something to keep her energy up today. She would be traveling for quite awhile to reach MoonClan, and she needed to keep her strength up.

She found a rabbit quickly, eating it for breakfast. She then got a drink of water from the stream, lapping at the water lightly.

After her meal was done, she gazed at the forest. This place had been home to her for a little over six moons, and she had been here longer than any other place she had lived. She knew, though, that she could not stay. Her family was more important than the

forest that she had lived peacefully in.

"I'm coming," she said loudly, beginning to run off into the woods.

She first entered the meadow, seeing the trees that laid beyond. She had not gotten here this way, for she had crossed the stream instead, coming from an entirely different part of the woods. Now, she would walk towards the trees beyond the meadow.

Taking a deep breath in, she walked calmly through the meadow, the sun shining down on her back, warming her up a little. It was green-leaf now, and she knew this was the perfect time to search for her family. With a plentiful amount of prey and water, it would be easy travel.

As she got to the end of the meadow, she looked back at her forest, sighing. She then turned around, marching into the trees ahead. Now, she had to find MoonClan.

She had never been in these woods before, though they smelled somewhat similar to the others. Less light shined through the trees, but it did not scare Snowfeather just yet.

She walked across the forest floor, gazing around the woods that she had entered. She pricked her ears, hearing the trickle of a creek, though she continued walking, knowing this was no time to make any rest stops.

Her family needed her, and Snowfeather had to protect them. Sure, she was a small runt of her family, but she knew how to fight, and she would die for her family, though she wasn't sure if they would do the same for her.

Suddenly, she heard a twig snap. She turned around, seeing nothing. Her heart began to race faster, and she picked up her pace a little, hearing the crack of branch.

"Who's there?!" Snowfeather hissed, turning around. She gasped, seeing the same Dark Forest she-cat from not too long ago glaring at her. "Who-who are you?!"

The she-cat laughed a little, padding near Snowfeather. Snowfeather backed away from the she-cat, unsheathing her claws. "Oh, dear, I'm not here to fight," she spoke.

The she-cat still spoke maliciously though, and Snowfeather continued to back away from her. "No, you're here to kill me, aren't you?"

The she-cat laughed louder this time. "Not even that!" she laughed. "I'm Pouncestar, an ancient BloodClan leader."

Snowfeather thought back to Lightningstar. Did she come for the same reason?

"Yeah, why do I care?!" Snowfeather hissed.

"Your clan needs you, Snowfeather. Even though your father assigned Briarstorm as deputy, she is dying, for she only has one life."

"But she's leader," Snowfeather spoke, relaxing a little.

"Yes, but Briarstorm, Briarstar, excuse me, only can have one life. Since Bone did not use all his, she was only given the amount of lives he lost, which was none, so she only has one life. Your father has only lost three lives now, so that is how much the next cat will receive. Return to BloodClan, Snowfeather."

"No!" Snowfeather spat. "Why should I?"

"What if your family has returned there? What if this journey is a lost cause?" Pouncestar spoke, circling Snowfeather.

"You're a Dark Forest cat! I don't trust you!" Snowfeather spat, launching at the she-cat. Pouncestar vanished though, reappearing behind Snowfeather. "I hear you were given a power. Maybe you could trade it for something bigger, like a Dark Forest power?"

"NO!" Snowfeather growled, realizing she was beginning to turn into mist. She quickly thought of herself as a cat again, the mist fading.

"Fascinating," Pouncestar laughed. "Keep what I said in mind, Snowfeather," she laughed, fading.

Snowfeather was relieved as she left. She sheathed her claws, beginning to run through the forest. She did not want to run into any more Dark Forest ancient BloodClan leaders. *Did any BloodClan leader go to StarClan?* she thought. It was a silly thought. If BloodClan had always acted vicious, no BloodClan leader would go to StarClan.

After running for awhile, Snowfeather slowed down, beginning to walk again. She caught her breath, slowly padding through the unfamiliar forest. Were there any clans nearby? She didn't know. It seemed no cat lived here, so she was unsure.

As she continued to journey throughout the day, she began to get hungry. She searched the woods, finding a lone squirrel. She pounced quickly, killing it. She ate the squirrel slowly, keeping her ears pricked for any cats or predators nearby.

After finishing her squirrel, she continued on her journey. But the sun soon began to set, and she knew she had to find some place to sleep for the night.

She looked for rocks, caves, a log even, but found nothing. The only thing she found was a very small clearing, big enough to fit a fox. She then laid down in it, wishing Bear was here to keep her warm.

She suddenly stopped. Bear? What was she thinking? Why had he just popped into her mind? Maybe she thought she would find him, though she'd probably strangle him. She shook her head, knowing only her family mattered now, not a mate or kits.

Yawning, she rested her head on her paws, though it took awhile for sleep to come to her. She was afraid another Dark Forest cat would pop out of the bushes, or maybe a bunch of angry rogues.

Finally, though, the forest was silent, and she fell asleep.

Chapter 26

Nearly a moon had passed since Snowfeather's departure from the woods she once trained in. The nights in the forest had been lonely and depressing. She wondered if she was already too late to save her family. She had prayed to StarClan that they were okay.

She had traveled through nearly three forests in this time, but no luck had come from it. She had met several kind clan cats, but none of them had ever heard of MoonClan or any cat from it. She would then accept their hospitality for a night, leaving the next morning.

Sometimes, Snowfeather still kept an eye out for Bear. She did not look for him to madly fall in love with him again though. She only kept an eye out for him so she could stop him from hurting other she-cats.

But Snowfeather didn't want to keep an eye out for him. She knew that if he were ever to show up, she'd probably claw him to shreds. So she kept her gaze on her family and the future, though she wondered if a mate and kits were ever in it.

Snowfeather padded through the forest, the warm breeze blowing softly against her pelt. She could not believe that green-leaf would end in just a few moons, but for now, she enjoyed the season.

Some rain had fallen during green-leaf, though not too much. Enough rain fell to keep rivers and streams full of water, and Snowfeather was thankful for that.

Snowfeather sniffed the air, picking up the scent of another cat. The scent was unfamiliar, and she gazed around, wondering who this cat was.

The scent was fresh, though Snowfeather heard nothing. She continued on her way, trying to get out of the area as quickly as possible.

A sudden hiss stopped her, and she spun around. "Hello?"

"What are you doing on our territory?!" a large white tom spat.

A creamy she-cat knocked the tom away. "Calm down, Milkfur."

Snowfeather stood, watching the two. She wondered if she should just run away now, but something made her stay in place.

"This is an intruder, Berryfire! Why are you acting like a soft-spot kittypet now?" Milkfur hissed, his yellow eyes glaring at the cream-colored she-cat.

"I don't mean to intrude," Snowfeather finally spoke up. "I'm just passing through."

"To where?" Berryfire asked.

"I'm not terribly sure," Snowfeather said.

"We have to bring her back to camp with us," Milkfur spoke to Berryfire. "Grassstar will not like it if we just ignore this event."

Berryfire sighed, looking at Snowfeather with her pale green eyes. "I'm sorry, but you'll have to come with us. We promise it'll only be for a short time. We won't hurt you."

Snowfeather felt like running again. She hesitated, then followed the two clan cats slowly through their territory, glancing around the woods that was home to them.

"What's your name?" Berryfire asked.

"Snowfeather," she replied.

"Ah, so you're a clan cat," Berryfire smiled. "What clan do

you come from?"

"Uh, well—" Snowfeather was cut off by Milkfur.

"We're here," he growled, approaching two trees that seemed to form an arch. Bright green bushes stood in front of the two trees, and Milkfur quickly padded through the bushes, Berryfire and Snowfeather padding behind.

Snowfeather padded into their camp nervously. She couldn't tell this unknown cats her past. If they found out she was from BloodClan, she'd be held prisoner for sure.

She looked down as she heard the whispers of cats snickering and laughing, and she slowly followed Milkfur and Berryfire towards a small den.

A fairly young brown tabby tom stood inside it, his eyes narrowing as Snowfeather padded into the den beside Milkfur and Berryfire.

"Who is this, Milkfur?" the tom asked.

"We found this she-cat on our territory, Grassstar," Milkfur replied. "She claimed she was just passing through, but she doesn't know where she's going."

Grassstar looked up at Snowfeather. "What's your name?"

"Snowfeather," Snowfeather spoke quietly.

"You look like you're around eleven moons," Grassstar guessed.

"No, I'm nearly fifteen moons," Snowfeather spoke loudly. "I was the runt of my litter."

Grassstar narrowed his gaze, slowly walking around Snowfeather. "What clan do you come from, Snowfeather? Or are you an exile? A runaway?"

"I come from, um..." Snowfeather did not know what to say.

A sudden idea lit up in her mind. "SnowClan. I come from SnowClan."

"SnowClan? That sounds far away from here," Grassstar said. "Why are you not in your clan?"

"My family is in another clan, and I need to see them. I'm looking for MoonClan," Snowfeather spoke. She winced, waiting for another hopeless response.

"MoonClan? Why that's just north of here!" Berryfire exclaimed.

What? Was Berryfire telling the truth? Did they actually know where her family was? Excitement filled Snowfeather, and she let out a smile. "I-It is?"

Milkfur nodded. "It's on the other side of the mountain."

"Oh, thank you! Thank you!"

"Not so fast," Grassstar growled. "You still trespassed through our territory. We'll keep you prisoner here, just for the night. Don't try to escape. For all I know, you could be planning battle on RainClan."

"RainClan? That's what this clan is called?" Snowfeather asked.

"Playing stupid, eh?" Milkfur asked.

"What? No!" Snowfeather spoke, growling at the tom. "I promise you I'm not planning battle. Keep me here for the night then."

"Very well," Grassstar said. "We'll let you go in the morning. Berryfire, give her something to eat. She can sleep in the old warriors den."

Berryfire nodded, leading Snowfeather out of the leader's den. "Sorry about that," Berryfire whispered. "I believe you."

"Thanks," Snowfeather spoke. "It seems you're the only one."

She was led to an older den, one that had gathered much dust. As Snowfeather stepped on a nest, it nearly crumbled to pieces. This was no hospitality.

"Don't worry. I'll get you some proper nests," Berryfire giggled.

Snowfeather sat in the warriors den, occasionally receiving a glare from a clan member. It was like she was in BloodClan all over again. Though this time, she was alone. It was only for a night. It wasn't like she was being held captive.

Berryfire padded back in moments later with a plump squirrel and some moss which she formed into a cozy nest.

Snowfeather bit into the squirrel, her empty stomach filling up from the long day of walking.

Berryfire fixed up her nest, and both remained silent as Snowfeather ate. After awhile, Snowfeather spoke. "Grassstar seems awfully young to be leader."

Berryfire nodded. "He was made deputy during his warrior ceremony. He's only about eighteen moons. Our leader died very shortly after he was assigned deputy."

"Interesting," Snowfeather said, finishing her meal. "Thanks for fixing the nest."

"No problem," Berryfire spoke. "That's nice you're going back to your family, but will you miss your old clan? Why did your family leave in the first place?"

Snowfeather nervously shuffled her paws. She hated lying, but she knew she had to. "I left, they didn't. I didn't feel MoonClan was right for me, so I went to SnowClan. I heard my family was in trouble, so I'm on my way right now to find them."

"That's odd that you don't remember the scent marks. Surely you know how to get there."

"It's been quite a long time," Snowfeather gulped. "I just wanted to make sure I was going the right way."

"Well, like I said, it's just over the mountain. About a moon's journey if you just walk. If you were to walk day and night or run, well, you'd be there in about fourteen sunrises."

A moon? Snowfeather didn't want to wait another moon! She wanted to find her family now! She knew that StarClan would watch over her family...hopefully, and she just had to hope for the best.

Berryfire exited moments later, and guards took place next to Snowfeather's den. The sun began to fade, and Snowfeather closed her eyes, thinking about her family. She then fell into a deep sleep.

Light shining through the den woke her, and she was face to face with Grassstar. The brown tabby tom growled as she awoke, and Snowfeather slowly got to her paws.

"Alright, you're free to go," he groaned, nearly pushing her out of the den.

Snowfeather staggered, finally regaining balance. RainClan cats glared at her, and she slowly made her way out of camp. As she disappeared into the bushes, she heard a sudden yowl.

"Wait!"

Snowfeather turned, spotting Berryfire. The she-cat had a rabbit in her mouth which she dropped at Snowfeather's feet.

"For your travel," she smiled. "Good luck. Remember, straight over the mountain."

"I will. Thank you for your kindness and hospitality, Berryfire," Snowfeather spoke, taking the rabbit from the she-cat.

Snowfeather then turned, padding away from the cream she-cat who watched her. Snowfeather looked up, seeing the large mountain from a distance. Her journey began now.

Chapter 27

Half a moon had passed since Snowfeather had begun her journey into the north where MoonClan lay. Along the way, she'd run into a few clans, though they had let her pass by easily, unlike the trouble she had with RainClan.

During this time, she had traveled through the foothills and mountains, coming across strange cats who lived not in clans, but tribes. She had passed by quickly though, not wanting to trouble them.

Now, she was nearly halfway over the mountains, and she was relieved, for she did not like them. Not many trees grew, and eagles and strange animals stirred inside. Some leftover snow still lay on the ground, and Snowfeather tingled as she felt it beneath her paws.

Patch by patch, Snowfeather sometimes walked on the dry dirt, and at other times, the icy snow. An eagle soared up ahead, and Snowfeather ducked, afraid it would leap towards her.

Snowfeather gazed around for some food, though it was hard finding food here. Only birds and eagles flew, and there were no trees to catch birds in. Sometimes, she would come across a lost rabbit or a mouse, but her stomach still grumbled constantly.

The eagle screeched, and Snowfeather felt herself stiffen as she continued to climb through the mountains.

Snowfeather looked up, seeing the eagle had flown away now. Obviously, it had better things to do. Snowfeather sighed as she continued to walk along the dirt path.

She looked up, spotting a few cat-like figures from a distance. These cats seemed to be everywhere, and she wondered how they even caught food up here in the mountains.

She watched as the same eagle flew down, and suddenly, a cat leapt on top of it, sinking its claws into the eagle's wings. The other cats helped, and Snowfeather stood in awe. They had just caught an eagle. It could surely supply food for a moon!

Snowfeather quickened her pace now, wanting to catch up to the cats to ask how they caught the eagle, when a sudden mrrowl of panic came from one of the cats. Snowfeather watched as they all ran away, leaving the dead eagle behind.

Snowfeather was confused. Why had they run away and left their brilliant catch behind? Snowfeather shrugged, not understand the way of the tribe cats. She decided to eat their prey.

If they're just going to leave it there, why not eat it, she thought as she padded towards the fallen eagle.

She approached slowly, slowly beginning to eat the eagle that they had caught. She ate it quickly, her stomach growls decreasing as she continued to eat.

As she ate at the eagle, she heard a footstep behind her. She turned, but nothing lay behind her.

Confused, she continued to eat the eagle, only to hear a sudden growl come from the side of her.

Snowfeather turned, nearly falling over as she gazed at what was in front of her. It was a cat, but it was not a cat like Snowfeather. This cat was large and tan, its brown tipped tail swaying back and forth.

It was like the lions her clans had talked about from LionClan, but this one had no mane, and it was smaller.

The beast let out an ear-piercing growl, coming towards Snowfeather. Snowfeather panicked, beginning to run away from the dead eagle.

The beast chased after her, hissing and screaming. Snowfeather ran as fast as she could, though the creature was fast, and Snowfeather knew it would catch up at some point.

Her heart pounding, Snowfeather climbed up a hill of rocks, a few falling down on the large cat.

The cat still managed to climb after Snowfeather though, and it swung its claw at her, missing Snowfeather by an inch.

Gasping, Snowfeather realized she could not hide any longer. She had to fight back. Snowfeather stopped running, and she turned, facing the animal. She bared her teeth and hissed, and the creature did the same.

Snowfeather suddenly leapt on top of the beast, clawing at its large back. The animal threw her off, and Snowfeather hit the rocks with a thud. The beast came after her, and Snowfeather scurried underneath it, hissing.

Suddenly, Snowfeather heard a mew from a regular cat, not this creature. Snowfeather's eyes widened as a large rock came tumbling down the hill, and Snowfeather quickly scurried out of the way.

The rock hit the gigantic creature with a bang, and the animal rolled down the hill, dazed. Here was Snowfeather's chance!

She leapt on the creature, clawing at it. The animal hissed and cried, though the rock had done damage, and it could not get to its feet.

Suddenly, Snowfeather struck a claw into its neck, killing the creature on impact. The animal hung its head down with a sigh, its chest no longer fluttering up and down.

"Praise the strange cat!" Snowfeather heard a sudden cry.

She turned, seeing about a dozen tribe cats smiling at her.

A gray tabby she-cat smiled, saying, "We've never seen a small cat like you take on a lion like that. Are you experienced?"

"N-No," Snowfeather stuttered. "I'm a clan cat."

Shocks came from the other cats, and a brown tabby tom

spoke this time. "How did you know how to kill one?"

"I didn't. I just defended myself," Snowfeather said, looking back at the dead lion.

Suddenly, a young white tom padded forward. "My name is Weasel That Scurries Under Rock, but I am otherwise known as Weasel. You possess odd skills, clan cat. Would you like to join the Tribe of Crashing Waves?"

"Oh, no," Snowfeather spoke quickly. "I'm flattered by your acceptance. My name is Snowfeather, and I am just making my way over the mountain to another clan."

"But why? Where have you come from?"

"A place far away from here," Snowfeather spoke. "Over many mountains and rivers, through many forests. All of my life has been a journey, but I've found the place I need to go now. I am thrilled by your offer, but I must head on my way now."

"You are making a big mistake," Weasel spoke. "You may have killed this lion, but others are past here."

"I'll take my chances, thank you," Snowfeather spoke.

The tribe cats stared at her oddly, and they acknowledged her one last time before turning away. Snowfeather still felt nervous about what they said. More lions were in these mountains? Sure, Snowfeather was able to kill one, but she couldn't kill all.

Sighing, she continued on her journey, past the Tribe of Crashing Waves.

She traveled throughout the rest of the day, her stomach filled from the eagle she had eaten earlier. Nothing else disturbed her. No lions, cats, or any other animals. She felt safe, she felt hopeful.

She had waited long and hard, and she knew MoonClan was close. She was almost to the place where her family laid, and she couldn't wait to see them.

Suddenly, she tensed. What would they say? Would they even remember her? What if they didn't care about her anymore? What if they still hated her?

Snowfeather did not know what to think as she layed down near a log. The sun had descended, and now only bright stars shined up above, their lights twinkling at Snowfeather. Maybe her mother was up there, telling her to not lose hope, though as each day moved forward, Snowfeather lost more.

"I'm trying, Mother," Snowfeather sighed. "I'm really trying."

She gazed at the stars for a few more moments before she eventually closed her eyes and fell asleep, the cold winds of the mountain blowing against her pelt at night.

Snowfeather dreamt she was in a forest. Squirrels and rabbits zoomed by, and Snowfeather could tell she was in StarClan.

She looked up, wondering why she was here. Were Silverwhisker and Stonecloud giving her another message? She was not sure.

Suddenly, she noticed a familiar pair of bright blue eyes making their way towards her, and she nearly screeched at the pure white pelt of the cat.

"MOTHER!" Snowfeather screeched, running towards the she-cat.

Her mother smiled at her, purring at her daughter. "Oh, Snowfeather. It's been so long," she purred.

Snowfeather let the tears slide down her face as she buried her face in her mother's soft pelt. Her mother was still taller than her, though Snowfeather realized she had grown, and she was no longer the small kit bundled up in her mother's tail.

"I've missed you so much," Snowfeather wailed.

Her mother wrapped her feathery tail around Snowfeather. "And I've missed you. I am very happy to see you have survived,

Snowfeather."

"Mother, why did you leave me?" Snowfeather asked with teary blue eyes.

Her mother sighed, gazing down. "I did not want to, Snowfeather. But exile could not reconsidered. I had two other kits to look after too, and I did not want the clan to hurt Flightpaw and Icepaw because their mother had not gone along with BloodClan's plans. I did not want to leave you, Snowfeather. But I had to."

"I understand," Snowfeather sighed.

"You have every right to be mad at me," Snowfeather spoke. "You ended up living better than the family."

"What was it like? What was it like with Moonstar?"

"She's evil, malicious, and can't be trusted. I practically raised her four kits. Every cat in that clan was pure evil, and I'm glad I finally stood up to opression. I could not live in another clan where evil was done over good."

Snowfeather smiled at this. Her mother was still the same.

"Now, why have you lost hope?" her mother asked.

"You listened," Snowfeather smiled.

"Of course I did," her mother replied.

"Well," Snowfeather looked down at her paws. "What if Whiteclaw-Bone, sorry, Ice, and Tooth do not accept me? What if they don't even remember me?"

"They will remember you, Snowfeather. They always have. Do not worry. They will have to accept you. Some of them have had a change of heart ..."

Some? What did her mother mean by some, or who?

"Thank you, Mother. I will try my best."

"You're welcome. MoonClan lies just ahead, my dear," her mother smiled, standing up. As her mother slowly began to walk away, Snowfeather suddenly spoke up.

"Wait!"

Her mother turned, gazing at her daughter.

"Tell Silverwhisker and Stonecloud 'hi' for me."

Her mother laughed and nodded, elegantly striding away. Snowfeather smiled as she caught the last glimpse of her mother, then everything faded, and she awoke.

Chapter 28

It had been nearly a moon since Snowfeather had left RainClan, crossing the treacherous mountains. She had not come face to face with any more lions or tribes, and she guessed it was StarClan who had protected her during that time being.

Snowfeather was out of the mountains now, back in another dense forest full of different and new scents. She guessed MoonClan was here. After all, that was RainClan's directions.

She padded through the woods as the sun's golden hues slowly begin to rise above the foothills behind Snowfeather.

She had awoken bright and early in hopes of finding MoonClan, though she had been searching for a few days now, and she did not know when she would ever find it. It had to be soon though, right?

She sighed as she dragged her paws with each step. She was tired of walking and searching. She just wanted to find her family and make sure that they were safe. That was all she ever wanted.

Though she had thought about it several times throughout the journey, she had never come face to face with Bear. He obviously had left in a different direction, and Snowfeather so terribly wanted revenge, but she knew it would not be worth it.

Bear had screwed up everything. She no longer wanted a mate or kits unless one cat changed her mind, but she knew it would never happen. She knew she could never really trust anyone again.

Snowfeather pricked her ears, spotting a squirrel race across the pathway that Snowfeather walked upon. Snowfeather leapt, grasping the squirrel in her claws. She killed it quickly, eating it slowly as she gazed around the forest.

She had to admit, this forest was pretty different. So far several foreign flowers stretched across bushes and trees, and Snowfeather had a hard time identifying plants at times, but she was always able to in the end, thanks to Stonecloud.

Finishing her squirrel, Snowfeather buried the remains, just in case a patrol came along and found her. She did *not* want to be held captive again.

She began walking again, sighing as she heard the chirpings of birds and the sounds of bugs buzzing on the trees. It seemed there were no cats anywhere around here. Had she been lied to all along?

She picked up her pace, walking faster now through the forest. There were no footsteps nearby, no strange sounds. It felt...odd to Snowfeather. She had been in so many dangerous situations in the forest. Why was it so peaceful?

Snowfeather pricked her ears, hearing the trickle of a stream nearby. She padded towards the sound of water, coming across a beautiful stream that trickled down rocks as it made its way along.

This was supposed to be MoonClan. The most evil, gruesome clan that any cat had ever laid eyes on. Why was everything here so peaceful and beautiful?

Snowfeather crouched near the water, gently lapping it with her tongue. Once she had finished drinking, she walked alongside the stream, hoping it would lead her to some clan.

Beautiful pastel pink flowers grew along the riverside, and Snowfeather even picked one and placed it near her ear. She couldn't believe how much she acted like a kit at times.

Snowfeather continued walking until the sun shone brightly above the forest, the hot rays of the sun heating down on Snowfeather's white pelt.

She sighed, wondering if this was a stupid idea. Maybe she was way off from MoonClan. She probably wasn't even going in the right direction.

Sighing she sat down, the pink flower still by her ear. Obviously Snowfeather had tucked it there real good.

"Hello?" Snowfeather called, wondering if any cat could hear her.

Only the sound of a bird chirping nearby came in response, and Snowfeather continued to sit, her legs aching from journeying all day.

Suddenly, Snowfeather heard a brush of leaves, and she turned, spotting no cat. Curious, she padded through the same bush she had heard the noise, but no cat sat there.

Before Snowfeather could even turn back, a sound of footsteps came. Hesitating, Snowfeather began to follow them. This could be a cat who could lead her to MoonClan!

Snowfeather continued following the noises, though she spotted no cat.

Suddenly, she tripped over a branch, nearly knocking into a large, gray tabby she-cat with sparkling indigo eyes.

"I-I'm sorry," Snowfeather spoke. "I didn't mean to—"

She was cut off by the she-cat's mew. "It's no problem. Who are you anyway? Why are you in our clan's territory?"

"I've been traveling to find a clan. What clan is this?"

The she-cat eyed her, then spoke, "This is MoonClan."

Chapter 29

Snowfeather's legs nearly faltered as she heard the name. She had found it. She had come upon MoonClan. After searching for her family for so long, she had found them.

Snowfeather was confused though. This was MoonClan, a clan that had been described as being more vicious and cruel than SnowClan. This she-cat showed no anger in her eyes. Snowfeather was sure that she would've ripped her to shreds by now.

"This is the clan I've been looking for," Snowfeather whimpered.

The tabby she-cat let out a small smile. "I'm glad you've found it," she spoke slowly. "My name is Rivertail. I'm a member of MoonClan. What is your name?"

"Snowfeather," she spoke quickly. "My family is supposed to be here."

Rivertail had a look of confusion on her face too. "I did not know any of our cats had a missing family member or one that had gone away."

"My family did not originate from here," Snowfeather explained.

Another confused look came from Rivertail, and she opened her mouth to speak. Only to close it moments after. "Why don't you come with me to camp?" she asked. "We can get everything sorted out there."

"Thank you," Snowfeather sighed in relief, following the kind she-cat through the woods. Her footsteps lightly landed on the soft dirt, and she heard a chirping of a bird from a tree up above.

"It's really beautiful here," Snowfeather spoke.

Rivertail nodded. "I've spent my whole life in these woods, and there is nowhere else I'd rather be."

Snowfeather could hear the chatter of cats now as they neared the camp. Large rocks stretched ahead, and Rivertail easily squeezed through a gap, Snowfeather following behind.

Snowfeather's eyes gazed in wonder as she looked around the camp that was protected by layers or rock. Cats padded by, smiling warmly at Snowfeather. How could this be MoonClan?

Snowfeather looked around, hoping to spot her family, but she could not see them at all, and she sighed in disappointment.

Rivertail leaded her to a small den, and the two padded inside. A black she-cat with bright green eyes sat inside, and Snowfeather guessed this was the leader of MoonClan.

Nothing made sense. MoonClan was supposed to be a fierce clan. Snowfeather did not recognize a single cat here, and every cat was being so kind. How could this be the place where her family lived?

"Nightstar," Rivertail spoke, bowing her head. Snowfeather did the same.

The she-cat gazed at Snowfeather long and hard before she eventually spoke. "Rivertail," she said, turning her head. "Who is this cat?"

"Snowfeather," Rivertail spoke slowly. "Apparently she's been looking for MoonClan for awhile. She claims her family lives here."

Nightstar turned her gaze to Snowfeather now, her green eyes fixed on Snowfeather. "Is this true?"

"Yes," Snowfeather spoke. "I've traveled long and hard to find MoonClan."

"And do you wish to join MoonClan?" Nightstar asked.

Snowfeather hesitated. She still was unsure about all of this. But her family was here, and she needed to protect them.

"Yes," Snowfeather spoke. "I would like to become a member of your clan."

"Very well. We never turn down eager clan members," Nightstar said. Then the oddest thing happened. The she-cat smiled.

"Rivertail, you'll be in charge of showing Snowfeather around. Make sure she knows every cat and all of the territory," Nightstar spoke. "Snowfeather, follow me. It is time we welcomed you to MoonClan."

Snowfeather slowly padded out of the den with Nightstar, Rivertail padding behind the two. Snowfeather cautiously followed Nightstar up a pile of tree branches, nearly slipping with each step.

"CATS OF MOONCLAN!" Nightstar's yowl rang through the camp. "Today, we have an eager clan member joining us. Her name is Snowfeather."

Cats turned to each other in confusion, wondering about Snowfeather and how she had come upon MoonClan. They only spoke for a few moments though before turning their attention back to their leader.

"Rivertail will be showing her around, and I'd like all of you to make her feel welcome in MoonClan. This is her new home. Snowfeather, I accept you as a MoonClan member," Nightstar spoke.

Snowfeather's paws tingled with excitement. She gazed out into the crowd of cats as they cheered, but she did not recognize any of her family members. These were still unknown faces.

Snowfeather padded down quickly after, only to feel Rivertail's pelt brush past her. Snowfeather did not know why, but she felt as if she would be friends with the she-cat for awhile.

"It's time for you to meet the members," Rivertail spoke. "Have you found your family yet?"

"There were so many cats, I couldn't tell," Snowfeather admitted.

Rivertail laughed, then motioned Snowfeather forward into the crowd of cats. Snowfeather immediately saw cats eye her, though they gave her a "welcome", continuing on with their activities.

Rivertail began introducing her to several cats. She met the elders

who thrilled her with stories, she met the apprentices who asked her to teach them foreign battle moves, she met the playful kits that enjoyed swiping at her tail, she met the deputy who promised to assign her on patrols soon, and she even met the medicine cat who greatly admired Snowfeather's skills in herbs.

Now they met the warriors, and Snowfeather nervously gazed around for her family, though she never came face to face with one family member. She knew that Rivertail could see the disappointment in her expression, and she watched as Rivertail tried to cheer her up by leading her to another group of cats.

Snowfeather did not feel like meeting any other cats, but apparently these were Rivertail's good friends, so Snowfeather went along with it.

"These are a few of my friends," Rivertail spoke, pointing her tail to a few cats sitting sown nearby. She led Snowfeather over, and Snowfeather nearly stopped in her tracks.

Sitting with the cats was a ginger tabby tom with bright green eyes. He looked up and smiled at Snowfeather, and her heart literally melted. He was the most handsome tom Snowfeather had ever seen.

She shook her head, angry with herself. You've already had a mate lie to you once. You shouldn't be falling in love with any other cats. There is no perfect cat for you, she told herself. Though by gazing at this tom, she felt as if all her memories of Bear has been erased.

"Hi," she spoke slowly, her eyes still fixed on the tom.

"Snowfeather, this is Lionstripe," Rivertail said.

"Hey, Snowfeather," he spoke, lifting his tail up to wave.

Lionstripe turned away, and Snowfeather was forced to direct her gaze to the she-cat that sat beside him.

"And this is Skyblossom," Rivertail spoke.

The brown tabby she-cat smiled, giving a small "hello", though she quickly turned her gaze back to Lionstripe, making Snowfeather's

heart nearly stop.

Skyblossom was in love with Lionstripe. Snowfeather could easily tell by the way she gazed at him. But she was unsure if Lionstripe loved her back.

Before Snowfeather could even gaze at Lionstripe one last time, she was pulled away by Rivertail to the edge of the camp.

Rivertail sat down near the edge of some rocks, Snowfeather sitting down beside her. Her mind still drifted towards Lionstripe though, and Snowfeather still had a terrible feeling in her gut as she remembered Bear and how she would never love again...

"So, are Skyblossom and Lionstripe mates?" Snowfeather blurted quickly.

"No," Rivertail said, smiling a little "You like him?"

"What? Um, no," Snowfeather stammered. "I was just curious."

Rivertail nodded slowly, though Snowfeather doubted she believed her. The two sat in silence for a little longer until Rivertail spoke again.

"Did you find your family?"

Snowfeather sighed and shook her head, gazing at her paws.

"Well, let's go see the territory," Rivertail said. "Maybe we can talk about it there."

Snowfeather nodded, following Rivertail through the rocks into the forest. Clouds loomed overheard, and Snowfeather could tell leaf-fall was nearly here.

"Snowfeather, what family are you exactly looking for?" Rivertail asked as they padded through the forest together.

"My father, my brother, and my sister," Snowfeather spoke.

"How were you separated?" she asked.

Snowfeather sighed. She hadn't even known Rivertail for a day, though still, she trusted her. Snowfeather sat down, Rivertail doing the same. It was obviously going to be a long story.

Snowfeather then began, explaining all about her mother, father, and siblings. She explained the pond that she nearly died in, she explained the exile, she explained her time in the woods and how she was told to look for MoonClan.

Rivertail nodded from time to time, never interrupting her story. Snowfeather left out certain parts of course about BloodClan, Stonecloud and Silverwhisker, and Bear. When she had finished, Rivertail gazed down at her paws sadly, and Snowfeather tilted her head with confusion.

"I'm so sorry, Snowfeather. There are no cats in this clan with those names..."

Snowfeather felt as if she had just died inside. She had searched for a moon, listened to all StarClan had told her. And for what? Just to hear her family did not even exist in the clan.

"Were they here earlier? My father was deputy! What about Moonstar? Is she here?"

Rivertail looked at her as if she had gone crazy. "I have no idea what you're talking about."

"MoonClan! The evil clan! The one with Moonstar and the rogues. My family was here. Moonstar killed my mother! You fought against FoxClan and SnowClan and lost. How come you're so nice now?"

"Snowfeather," Rivertail spoke softly. "I think you've stumbled upon the wrong MoonClan. We have never been evil. We've never had a leader named Moonstar. We have not taken in any rogues, we have not heard of FoxClan and SnowClan, and we never battled any clan."

Snowfeather felt flames burst inside of her. Anger spiked through her pelt, and she began to stalk off.

"Snowfeather, wait! Where are you going?" Rivertail asked.

"Back to camp," she moaned, tears streaming down her white chin as she ran back to the MoonClan camp, running straight into the warriors den.

She sat in the corner of the den, moaning and sobbing. Where was her family? How was this the wrong MoonClan? It did not make any sense.

She continued to sob even though she heard footsteps near her. It was probably Rivertail attempting to comfort her, though Snowfeather didn't care. Her words would not soothe Snowfeather.

But this was not Rivertail's voice, but a much deeper, masculine voice. "Snowfeather."

Snowfeather looked up, nearly gasping as she saw Lionstripe standing before her. His green eyes were full of concern, and she looked at her paws. "What?" she snapped a little too harshly.

"Rivertail told me what happened. She told me about how you had come to the wrong clan."

"Yeah, so what?!" Snowfeather sobbed.

Her tears became to cease as she felt Lionstripe's tail slowly curl around her. "I just wanted to make sure you're okay. I'm so sorry that this happened. She explained that your journeyed long and hard."

This wanted to make Snowfeather cry even more. Now Lionstripe knew her terrible backstory too, or, well, most of it.

"Will you be staying in MoonClan?" he asked.

"I don't know," Snowfeather spoke.

"Well, you should. At least give it a chance," Lionstripe said. He stood up, his tail no longer curls around Snowfeather. "I'll see you around," he said with a slight smile, padding out of the den.

Then Snowfeather smiled. Yes, she would give MoonClan a chance, just for awhile. Lionstripe's words still echoed in her head, and she giggled a little. Was she falling in love all over again?

Chapter 30

"Snowfeather, wake up," the gentle mew from Rivertail rang in Snowfeather's ears. She opened her eyes to see the sun had nearly risen, and all the nests were empty in the warriors den.

"You're going to be late for patrols," Rivertail said, letting out a smile.

Snowfeather smiled a little too, and she got up from her nest to pad outside into the MoonClan camp. Cats were already gathered by the deputy who issued cats to each patrol.

Snowfeather could already see Lionstripe's ginger pelt glow in the sunlight, though her stomach churned as she noticed Skyblossom next to him.

"Snowfeather, Rivertail," the voice of the deputy, Fishstorm, boomed. "You're on the patrol with Lionstripe."

Snowfeather couldn't help but give a little hop of excitement as she went over to where Lionstripe and the others stood. She watched as Skyblossom was assigned to another patrol. She issued a quick good-bye Lionstripe then padded off.

Lionstripe's face lit up as he saw Snowfeather and Rivertail. He gave a small nod to Rivertail, then gazed down with his green eyes at Snowfeather. "So, you decided to stay?" he asked.

Snowfeather nodded. "I decided to give MoonClan a chance for awhile. Who knows? I might love it here."

Lionstripe gave a nice nod as the patrol began to pad off. Snowfeather stayed by Rivertail's side as they patrolled the borders.

"You like Lionstripe," Rivertail whispered.

"No!" Snowfeather denied. "He's just very nice, that's all."

Rivertail suppressed a small giggle. "Come on, Snowfeather. I've been watching the way you've been staring at him. I saw when you looked at him the first time. Come on, you obviously like him."

"Hush down," Snowfeather whispered. "Alright, I like him, but what about Skyblossom? She obviously likes him too. It's probably too late."

Rivertail kept her mouth shut for a moment as they continued across the terrain of the forest. Then she spoke. "Yes, you're right, Skyblossom does, but Snowfeather, isn't it obvious that Lionstripe does not have a liking towards her? He never has! He's always thought they were just friends- that we were all best friends. I've known Lionstripe since kithood, and believe me, he'd probably think of it to be the oddest thing if he and Skyblossom became mates."

"But, they always seem to be by each other's sides. Their nests are even pushed together," Snowfeather complained.

"Skyblossom's idea, no doubt. But look, Snowfeather, you've got to believe me. Lionstripe is looking for another cat, not Skyblossom, and that cat is you."

"M-me? He said so himself?" Snowfeather asked, surprised.

"Well, no, but trust me, I'll help you out," Rivertail spoke, placing her tail on Snowfeather's shoulder.

"You really would do that for me?" Snowfeather asked. She'd barely known this she-cat for a day, and now suddenly she was beginning to understand friendship.

"That's what friends are for, right?"

"Oh, thank you!" Snowfeather exclaimed, jumping up and down. A few cats turned to around to oddly stare at the new member, but they turned away within a few moments.

"Better catch up to him. You don't have Skyblossom to hold you back," Rivertail pointed out.

Snowfeather nodded, facing ahead of the patrol to catch up with Lionstripe. She padded up towards him, beginning to walk by his side.

Suddenly, her knees became shaky, and she felt her throat clog. How could she talk to Lionstripe right now? With Bear, it had all seemed so easy.

No, don't think about Bear, she thought. *Lionstripe is not Bear. He's different.*

"Hey," Snowfeather said weakly.

"Oh, hey. Didn't see you catch up," Lionstripe chuckled. There was a pause before he spoke again. "You still somber about your family?"

"I'll find them when the time comes," Snowfeather admitted. "Maybe StarClan will send me a message with better directions this time." This comment made Lionstripe laugh, and Snowfeather giggled too.

"I just needed to take some time off from looking for my family. Relax a little, you know? It's so nice to be in a clan," Snowfeather spoke.

Lionstripe nodded. "Of course. How long were you journeying?"

Snowfeather shuffled her paws at this. She had not become this close with Lionstripe yet to let him know the truth "Eleven moons, I guess."

"What clan did you come from?"

"SnowClan," Snowfeather blurted out. It had been the first clan to pop into her head. "It's a long way away from here."

"Sounds like it," Lionstripe replied.

Throughout the rest of the patrol, Snowfeather continued to chat with Lionstripe about MoonClan. She was able to learn more about him, and he was able to learn more about her. Needless to say, they had become better friends during the day.

As mid-day neared, Snowfeather shared a squirrel with Rivertail as she watched Lionstripe chat with Skyblossom. Had Rivertail truly been telling the truth? It seemed they were caught up in each other.

"Rivertail," Snowfeather said, swallowing her bite if squirrel. "Are you sure they don't like each other? I mean, you're Skyblossom's best friend, are you not?"

"Trust me, Lionstripe has no interest towards her, and yes, Skyblossom and I are good friends. I've known her since kithood too," Rivertail said.

"Well, not to be rude, but, aren't you kind of turning against her by helping me?" Snowfeather asked.

"Well," Rivertail said slowly, "it's not to be mean, not to be cruel. We're good friends, I assure you, but, well, Lionstripe and Skyblossom don't seem right for each other. I don't want Skyblossom's heart to be set out on a tom that'll probably never love her back. There are so many young toms who like Skyblossom, but, Lionstripe doesn't seem right for her, and I don't think Lionstripe can deal with her all the time. She can be a bit...obnoxious and rude at times. Lionstripe isn't like that."

"Oh," Snowfeather said. She was interrupted as she saw Lionstripe approach.

"Hey," Lionstripe said, sitting down.

"Hey," Snowfeather and Rivertail both replied in unison.

"So, Skyblossom doesn't want to go hunting because a small thorn was stuck in her foot earlier today, so I was asking if you guys wanted to go hunt," Lionstripe said.

Rivertail and Snowfeather both exchanged glances, and before Snowfeather could speak, Rivertail spoke. "I'm supposed to be on mid-day patrol, but I'm sure you and Snowfeather cold go."

Snowfeather nodded vigorously.

"Well, alright then. Ready to go, Snowfeather?" Lionstripe asked.

Snowfeather nodded and rose from her spot on the ground. As she began to pad away with Lionstripe, she turned around and smiled at Rivertail, mouthing "thanks".

Rivertail replied with a wide grin, and Snowfeather and Lionstripe padded away into the forest.

"I've never been hunting in these woods before!" Snowfeather exclaimed, looking around the majestic woods. A small bird flew from up above and landed on the gentle branches of the tree. The first leaf fell slowly on Snowfeather's nose, and she knew leaf-fall had arrived.

"It seemed leaf-fall would never come," Lionstripe admitted, laughing a little as the leaf slowly floated off Snowfeather's nose.

"Isn't that a bad thing? I hate leaf-bare," Snowfeather admitted.

"Don't like getting your paws wet in the snow?" Lionstripe joked.

"No, it's not that. It's--" Snowfeather paused, remembering the struggle for food at the time. She remembered the cold nights, the nights before StarClan had cared for her. "It's just prey is scarce, and it's so cold."

"But you've got that huge coat!" Lionstripe exclaimed.

"I guess so," Snowfeather laughed "So, are we going to hunt?"

Before either of them could speak, a mouse slowly crept out of a hole, and Lionstripe motioned for her to be silent as he crept slowly then leapt, missing the mouse in its entirety.

"Nice fail," Snowfeather laughed.

"I nearly had it," Lionstripe complained.

"You were way off. Don't deny it!" Snowfeather giggled again.

"I'm going to get you for that!" Lionstripe said, beginning to run towards Snowfeather.

Snowfeather giggled once more, beginning to run off. "Can't catch me!" she laughed, beginning to run.

She giggled and laughed, and suddenly Lionstripe appeared beside her. How had he gotten to her so fast?

She ignored this thought and continued to run, though Lionstripe seemed to appear every time. Without thinking, Snowfeather quickly changed into mist form and landed on the nearby branch of a tree.

She gasped in shock, not meaning to reveal her powers. She had worked so hard during her journey in the mountains to control and practice with them, and now her secret had been blown.

She noticed Lionstripe's look of confusion, and she sighed, a misty haze rolling over the tree as she appeared back down by Lionstripe. "Sorry," she spoke slowly. "I have powers...mist powers..."

She watched as Lionstripe's look of confusion curved into a smile. "Really?! I've got powers too!"

"No way!" Snowfeather exclaimed with excitement. "What can you do?"

"I can run at lightning speed," Lionstripe said, quickly running around a tree only to appear at Snowfeather's side in a few seconds.

"I can transform into mist," Snowfeather said, turning into mist and then appearing on the other side of Lionstripe.

"Wow, I never thought any other cat had powers. I thought I was the only one. Only Nightstar knows about it," Lionstripe admitted.

"You're the first cat I've revealed my powers to," Snowfeather admitted. "Please promise you won't tell. Not even to Nightstar."

"I promise," Lionstripe said. "Promise you won't tell mine either?"

"I promise," Snowfeather said, smiling at Lionstripe. His green eyes gazed deeply at her, and she she grinned even more. She and Lionstripe had something in common, a secret. Though her powers

were only a small part of her secret.

Chapter 31

It had been nearly a moon since Snowfeather's arrival in MoonClan. Though she had not heard from StarClan or her family, she did not mind too much. After all, she had a great friend, a lovely tom whom she was crushing on, and a great community. MoonClan was unlike anything she had ever experienced.

She and Lionstripe had become great friends, as had she and Rivertail. Snowfeather seemed to stray from Skyblossom though. She despised the she-cat, and she was pretty sure Skyblossom despised her too.

Snowfeather had continued to hunt with Lionstripe, she had continued to share prey with him. She had not told him anymore about her past, for she was afraid he would leave her after hearing. Rivertail had not, but Snowfeather had not been completely honest with Rivertail either.

Snowfeather's hunting and eating with Lionstripe however was split between her and Skyblossom, so she was only able to hang out with him half of the time. This was alright though because it allowed Snowfeather to hang out with Rivertail.

Snowfeather felt the familiar nudge on her shoulder. Rivertail woke her every morning for patrols, so Snowfeather didn't have to worry about waking up early.

As Snowfeather opened her eyes, she was not gazing into Rivertail's, but Lionstripe's emerald green eyes. He gave a soft smile, one that made Snowfeather's stomach flutter, and she slowly got up.

"Where's Rivertail?" Snowfeather asked. "She usually wakes me up."

Lionstripe pointed to the corner of the den where Rivertail was curled up, her tail resting over her nose as she snoozed.

"Nightstar put her on night patrol, so she's letting her skip morning

patrol today," Lionstripe explained to Snowfeather. "We better hurry. The morning patrol has already left."

Snowfeather nodded and quickly rushed out of the den with Lionstripe by her side. She couldn't help but smile at the jealous glare Skyblossom gave her as they padded by together. It wasn't as if Lionstripe noticed.

Lionstripe and Snowfeather caught up to the patrol in a short amount of time. The patrol hadn't gone too far in the forest when they had arrived.

"Finally, they've arrived," a small apprentice complained. His mentor shushed him only moments later.

"Sorry we're late," Lionstripe spoke. He turned and gazed at Snowfeather. "Someone slept in..."

All the cats flicked their gaze to Snowfeather whose cheeks brightened with embarrassment. She had not meant to be late. She had just assumed that Rivertail would wake her up like every morning. Obviously that wouldn't be enough to apologize though.

The cats turned away, beginning to walk again. Snowfeather walked with Lionstripe in the back of the patrol, trying to get over the mistake she had made that morning.

"Thanks for being late with me," Snowfeather said to Lionstripe.

Lionstripe hesitated, then spoke. "It's no problem. I know Rivertail usually wakes you up."

Then it happened. Their eyes locked simultaneously, so perfectly. It was the perfect moment. The perfect moment for Snowfeather to tell him everything. She leaned forward a little, and he turned away. Lionstripe had just ruined the perfect moment,

Snowfeather sighed and turned away too, though she could see out of the corner of her eye that Lionstripe was watching her.

How can I tell him? she thought. *How can I tell him that I love him?*

The rest of the patrol was boring as always, for MoonClan never saw that much action. Barely any clans lived nearby. It was rare for MoonClan to remark their borders. They did it maybe once a moon.

"Do you want to hunt after the patrol?" Snowfeather asked Lionstripe.

"I can't, sorry," Lionstripe spoke. "I promised Skyblossom I would go with her."

"Oh, I see," Snowfeather sighed, gazing down at her paws.

"Hey," Lionstripe said. "How about we go in the evening?"

Snowfeather's spirit suddenly lifted. "Alright!" she exclaimed, a wide grin painted on her face. Lionstripe had one too.

The patrol ended shortly after, and Snowfeather left Lionstripe to catch up with Rivertail who sat by the fresh-kill pile, eating a squirrel.

"Hey," Snowfeather said, sitting down next to her friend.

"Hey," Rivertail replied.

"Thanks for making me late this morning," Snowfeather grumbled.

"Hey, I didn't want to go on night patrol. Nightstar made me. She claimed it would 'broaden my horizon' which it didn't. Didn't Lionstripe wake you up like I asked him to?"

"Yes, but I was already late by the time he woke me," Snowfeather told her.

"Well, sorry," Rivertail said. "Are you going hunting with him today?"

Snowfeather nodded. "In the evening though, so it won't be for awhile. Is there anything you want to do?"

Rivertail shrugged. "Not really. It's just a normal day. Has StarClan said anything to you about your family?"

Snowfeather shook her head. "No, nothing at all. Not even a sign..."

"Well, maybe they are here," Rivertail suggested, "just not in the clan. Maybe they're in these woods."

"Maybe..." Snowfeather replied. Rivertail had a point. Sure, maybe her family was not in this clan, but maybe they were in these woods. This got Snowfeather thinking, and she even thought of going out exploring in the woods around MoonClan, but she held herself back. This was her time to spend with Rivertail.

"Do you want the rest of it?" Rivertail asked, shoving her half eaten squirrel towards Snowfeather.

"Sure! I'm starving!" Snowfeather remarked, beginning to gobble up Rivertail's squirrel that had been caught in the morning. After Snowfeather had finished, she slowly tapped Rivertail. "Tag!" she called.

Rivertail laughed. "I have to warn you, I beat all the other kits at this game when I was a kit." She ran quicker towards Snowfeather now, and Snowfeather was afraid she was going to turn in mist form. She slowed down some, and Rivertail caught her. "Tag!" she spat.

Snowfeather began to chase Rivertail around camp now, even knocking over a few warriors by accident who were strolling around camp with ease.

"WHAT IS GOING ON?!" Nightstar's shriek pierced Snowfeather's ears.

Immediately, Rivertail and Snowfeather came to a halt. They looked down at their paws as Nightstar eyed them angrily.

"I am in my den enjoying a rabbit when I hear two she-cats are playing tag around camp and knocking cats over. I assumed they were kits, apprentices maybe, but not two of my warriors!" Nightstar exclaimed. "What do you two have to say for yourselves?"

"I'm sorry," Snowfeather began. "It was my idea. We were bored, and I thought it would be fun if we played around the camp..."

"Is this true?" Nightstar said, turning to Rivertail. She did not obviously believe any words that came out of Snowfeather's mouth.

"Yes, this is true," Rivertail said.

"I'll leave you off with a warning this time," Nightstar said. "But next time, leave the kit games to the kits, not the warriors." With those words, the she-cat stormed away.

"Well that was the stupidest lecture I've ever gotten," Snowfeather said. This did not cheer up Rivertail though. She still sat staring at her paws.

"Hey, what's the matter?" Snowfeather asked. "You're not seriously upset about that, right?"

"I-I've never gotten yelled at like that before. She was about to punish us, Snowfeather. She's lost all trust in me now. Thanks a lot," Rivertail complained.

"Rivertail," Snowfeather began, but the she-cat had already gotten up and began to pad to the warriors den.

Snowfeather did not know why, but she was as mad at Rivertail as Rivertail was mad at her. It was just a game and a silly lecture. Why did she care so much?

Snowfeather felt a tail on her shoulder, and she spun around to see Lionstripe looking at her. "What was that all about? With Rivertail?"

"Nothing," Snowfeather lied. "She's just being silly. Come on, are you ready to go hunting?

Lionstripe nodded, beginning to go padding in the woods with her. "Hey," he said as they padded in. "Want to ride on my back as I run lightning speed?"

"Is it safe?" Snowfeather asked, suppressing a small giggle.

"Of course," Lionstripe laughed.

Snowfeather nodded and crawled on top of the large tom. His fur

was as soft and warm, and she buried her nose in it.

Suddenly, without warning, Lionstripe began running quickly. Snowfeather dug her claws into his back as she attempted to stay on. Wind whisked at her fur, and she felt alive, she felt happy. A smile spread across her face, and she let out a shout of joy. Lionstripe came to a halt only moments later, and it wasn't until then that she realized she had been holding onto Lionstripe tightly.

Lionstripe stretched his back as Snowfeather got off, and Snowfeather looked around at the place he had taken her to. It was a lovely hill that looked over all of MoonClan. The rocks that surrounded the camp were visible from here, and Snowfeather smiled.

Lionstripe padded beside her and sat down next to her. "How sharp are your claws?" he groaned.

"Sorry," Snowfeather giggled. "You were going so fast, I was afraid I was going to fall off."

"Yeah, well, I can't go that fast for too long. It really tires me out," he said, yawning. "So, what's really up with you and Rivertail?"

"Well, you heard how we got in trouble, right?"

Lionstripe laughed. "Yes, for playing tag in the camp. I remember."

"Well, she thought it was a big deal that we were almost punished, and she claimed Nighstar had lost all trust in her," Snowfeather told him.

"Well, it's not really your fault, I guess. Rivertail's always been committed to being the best warrior she can be. She wanted Nightstar to like her so she would be deputy. That's why she doesn't want a mate or kits. She wants to be leader."

"I-I never knew that," Snowfeather admitted. Now she felt guilty and disappointed with herself. She shouldn't have been angry at Rivertail. Snowfeather was now angry at herself.

"I'm sure if you just talk to her it'll be alright," Lionstripe said.

"I hope so," Snowfeather sighed. "Or else I've just lost my best friend..." She laid down next to Lionstripe and slowly leaned against him without any hesitation. Lionstripe did the same, and the soon the two were cuddled next to each other. Snowfeather's head rested in his fur, and her eyes slowly closed as she felt Lionstripe's tongue gently lick her cheek. She then fell asleep with Lionstripe beside her.

Chapter 32

A few days had passed since Lionstripe and Snowfeather had gone into the woods together, since she had fallen asleep beside him. After that, Lionstripe had been distancing himself from her. It was nothing big. He still spent time with her. Snowfeather just thought he was spending less time, and he did not look at Snowfeather the same.

Snowfeather awoke early today before Rivertail. This event rarely occurred.

Snowfeather felt guilt build up inside of her as she looked down at the sleeping she-cat. Snowfeather still had not apologized to her, but today, she planned to. She *needed* to. She couldn't lose her only friend.

The sun was still rising now, and cats were beginning to wake. A few sat in the center of camp eating some fresh kill. Fishstorm was already out assigning cats on patrol. Snowfeather padded over to him like she did every morning, waiting for him to assign her to the morning patrol.

"Snowfeather," he said, glancing over at the other cats. "You'll be going on afternoon patrol. We've got enough for the morning."

This surprised Snowfeather. Normally she was always on morning patrol. Why was she moved to afternoon. Snowfeather opened her mouth to protest, but Fishstorm had already padded off.

Snowfeather turned, spotting Lionstripe and Skyblossom sharing a squirrel. Anger flared in Snowfeather. It was obvious now that jealousy spiked every time she saw the two together, and she had to force herself to calm down.

She moved a paw forward, about to join them, when she noticed Rivertail slowly padding out of the den.

You need to apologize now, Snowfeather thought. *Lionstripe doesn't matter. There will be time to talk to him later.*

With these thoughts, she padded towards Rivertail who gazed down as she came by. "Morning," she murmured, beginning to slowly pad by.

"Rivertail, wait," Snowfeather said.

Rivertail turned. "What? What do you want?"

"I wanted to apologize," Snowfeather began. "I'm sorry. I didn't know you wanted to be deputy. I didn't think Nightstar would lose your trust. It was just a game. I can go tell her it's all my fault if you'd like. Will you please just accept my apology so we can be friends again?"

Rivertail hesitated for a moment. "No, don't tell Nightstar. It was my fault too. I'd like to be an honest cat more than a liar. Yes, Snowfeather, I accept your apology. I've missed you."

"I've missed you too," Snowfeather told her. "I've been having to wake myself up early, and it's torture."

Rivertail laughed, and the two padded over to the fresh kill pile to share a robin. As they ate, Snowfeather noticed Lionstripe gazing at her. A smile was lit on his face, a smile that Snowfeather had not seen in awhile. He mouthed the words, "Everything better?"

Snowfeather gave a nod, and he turned away shortly after, though Snowfeather noticed him gazing at her every few minutes.

"How's everything between you and Lionstripe?" Rivertail asked.

"I'm still unsure," Snowfeather told her. "He's sending me mixed messages. Sometimes, it seems he's in love with me. But then, it's like he just wants to be friends. I don't know what to think..."

"Lionstripe is odd like that. He's very mysterious, and it's hard to read him," Rivertail told her. "I'm sure you'll find out eventually."

"I hope so," Snowfeather told her.

The day continued on slowly, and with nothing to do, Snowfeather paced around the camp, sometimes fixing her nest, sometimes cleaning up the camp. But with no morning patrol, there was hardly anything to do.

At one point, Snowfeather turned to Rivertail who was also stuck in the same situation. It seemed Fishstorm had created an entirely new morning patrol, leaving the regulars to find something to do. "I'm going to go hunting," she said.

"Do you want me to come?" Rivertail asked. "I was going to head over to the nursery to play with the kits, but I'd come."

"It's fine. I think I need some alone time," Snowfeather said. She then padded into the woods, the MoonClan camp disappearing.

The woods were quiet, and all Snowfeather could hear was the crunching of dead leaves beneath her paws. The trees were now

orange and red, such beautiful autumn colors. Snowfeather had never been able to see the colors like this before. At this time before, she had been just a young kit locked away in the nursery.

Snowfeathed shuddered at her BloodClan memories. It had been so long ago, but she had remembered them so clearly. She no longer thought of herself as a BloodClan cat, but a MoonClan one. That was who she wanted to be.

Her thoughts came to an end as she heard a crunch of leaves nearby. She turned quickly but spotted no cat. She carefully walked now, trying to be quieter. She was not sure what was in these woods, and she did not want to run into any dangerous animals.

A flash of white came by, and Snowfeather stopped. "Hello?" she called.

She saw the tip of an ear by a bush, and she slowly walked towards it. She held her breath as she came by, and she walked around the bush.

She nearly fainted at what she saw. There was a younger tom, probably the age of an apprentice, with ginger fur and bright green eyes. But this did not frighten her. What did was the pure white she-cat who looked her age. Her sparkling blue eyes were so familiar, and Snowfeather swore she saw her past in them. Then it hit her.

"ICEKIT?!" she screeched.

The she-cat scanned and Snowfeather, and her eyes widened as well. "Snowkit?! Is that you?! I hardly recognized you...I thought I was seeing the ghost of our mother."

"Yes, Icekit, it's me! Except now I'm Snowfeather. I took the name after our mother," Snowfeather explained.

"I'm Ice now," Ice told her. "What are you doing here? Are you a warrior in another clan? How did you survive?! They told us you wouldn't."

"I don't know how I did," Snowfeather spoke. As much as a pain her sister was, Snowfeather trusted her, and she began to tell her story of survival to Ice. She told her of how she was near death. She told her of the miracle, Oceankit and Wavekit, she even told her about Silverwhisker and Stonecloud. She left Bear out of the story, for she didn't want to speak of him.

Ice's mouth gaped open, and the young tom who sat beside her looked confused. "I can't believe you're alive, Snowk-

Snowfeather. It's a miracle."

"Mother, who is this?" the young tom beside her asked.

"Is this your kit?" Snowfeather asked.

Ice nodded, though pain showed in her eyes. "Snowfeather, you don't know we've been through. Mother is dead."

"I know," Snowfeather admitted. "StarClan told me. What was MoonClan like? Tell me everything! Where's Flightkit and father? Or aren't their new names Tooth and Bone?"

"I have to admit, MoonClan got to me. I'm sure it got to every BloodClan cat, except Mother of course. I was a young warrior, Snowfeather, and I fell in love with an older tom named Rock. He had silky gray fur and a white chest. I loved him so. I gave birth to three kits..."

"Where are the others?" Snowfeather asked.

She could tell by the tears in Ice's eyes that the story did not continue well. "Fire," she said, pointing to the tom beside her. "And a black she-cat named Night, and a gray tabby tom named Rain. Oh, I loved them. Night and Fire were to become the best MoonClan warriors. Rain, he wanted to become a medicine cat apprentice.

"But then the battle came. Rock was killed, as was Night. Yes, I killed another young she-cat in the process. SnowClan and FoxClan were good fighters, I have to say. After the battle, our father ended MoonClan. Rain fled to another clan. Fire and I are rogues now," Ice explained.

Snowfeather shivered as Ice explained her killing a young she-cat. She knew her siblings were still vicious killers. "What happened to Tooth and Bone?"

"Tooth was mates with Moonstar's daughter, Leopardtail. Leopardtail expected kits, but by then, a love triangle began to occur with Screechshade. Moonstar's son, Tigerstripe, loved this she-cat, and Tooth began to love her too. Screechshade, Snowfeather, was who killed our mother."

Snowfeather felt pain deep inside her. She wanted to kill this cat, truly, but she knew it wasn't right, and she wouldn't.

"Tooth and Screechshade became mates, and by the time Leopardtail's kits were born, she and Tooth were no longer mates. Tooth wanted to name the kits, but Leopardtail disagreed and decided to raise them. Tooth would've been a fool to ignore Moonstar's daughter. Leopardtail had two toms- Cloud and Fang.

They both resembled Tooth with their white fur. Fang wanted to become a MoonClan warrior, but Cloud was different, similar to Rain. He wanted to be good.

"The battle came, and Leopardtail was killed. Tooth then had full responsibility over his two sons. Screechshade went off without him, guilty she had taken him from his mate. Cloud went off with Rain. Tooth raised Fang, not in a good manner, of course. Fang is still young, though he's on his own now. He visited Tooth from time to time, but from what I heard, Tooth died very recently. Apparently he was a holding a she-cat and her young son captive. Typical..."

"And our father?" Snowfeather asked.

"He was sad about our mother for probably a few days. He then became mates with a younger she-cat in MoonClan. They went off together. I think they have kits now."

Snowfeather felt rage inside her. How dare her father, who she thought truly loved her mother, now care about the death of his own mate?!

"Ice," Snowfeather spoke. "Why don't you live here in this MoonClan with us? Everyone is so kind her. Fire could be an apprentice. I'd hate to see you leave."

But Ice shook her head. "I've been raised evil all my life. I could never be in a normal clan. It was nice seeing you, Snowfeather. Maybe we'll meet again someday, but for now, I must go."

"Wait," Snowfeather spoke as Ice and Fire turned. "Did you see any young apprentices while fighting against SnowClan?"

Ice gave her an odd look. "There were so many cats, probably. All I know is that the one I killed was a light gray tabby she-cat with bright green eyes."

Snowfeather felt her stomach churn. Was it possible? "Was that she-cat's name Oceankit, perhaps?" she asked weakly.

Ice thought for a moment. "I do recall a young spotted tom yelling that. I guess so. Why?"

"No reason," Snowfeather replied. She unsheathed her claws and dug them into the ground. "Good-bye, Ice. It was nice seeing you."

Ice nodded and headed away. As soon as she was gone, Snowfeather let out a deafening scream.

How had her sister killed that innocent young she-cat?!

Snowfeather had been happy to know the she-cat had made it, but to know her own sister killed Oceankit?! It was horrifying. And how dare her father do that as well! Her brother was a no good tom either. Nothing had changed. Her family was still terrible.

Snowfeather screamed again in anger, and she let tears fall down her cheeks. She sat for awhile until she heard fast footsteps approaching her.

"Snowfeather! Snowfeather! Are you alright?!"

She looked up to see Lionstripe with his green eyes, as always. But Snowfeather wasn't happy to see him. She just wanted to be alone. "I'm fine!" she wailed.

"But you screamed a few times. What happened?"

"I-I saw my sister, okay?! And I found out some things that I really wish I hadn't found out," Snowfeather growled.

Rivertail came only moments later, and Snowfeather did not dare to look up at the she-cat. She was angry and depressed. It was like being in the woods all over again.

"She saw her sister," Lionstripe explained.

"That's good, isn't it?" Rivertail asked.

"No, no it's not!" Snowfeather hissed. "My family didn't change at all. They're still evil, murderous cats! It's a miracle my sister didn't kill me!"

Lionstripe and Rivertail both exchanged glances at each other. "What do you mean?"

"Nothing," Snowfeather replied. "Let's just go back to camp."

And so the three slowly walked back to camp. Snowfeather had two cats she loved on either side of her, though she didn't feel loved. She felt anything but loved. Sure, she had seen her sister, she had found her family, she had uncovered everything. But now, she wished she hadn't.

As she fell asleep in the night, she awoke in StarClan, a place she had not been in moons. Her mother padded near her, a smile across her face.

"What? What do you want?!" Snowfeather growled.

"Snowfeather, don't be angry. What did you expect?" her mother gently asked.

"I-I just thought you'd all changed. I thought they turned out like you, Mother! I didn't think Ice would kill that sweet Oceankit. I didn't think Tooth would be such a horrible tom. I didn't think my father would get over you so quickly and completely

forget you!"

"Hush, Snowfeather," her mother said, placing a light tail on her shoulder. "What you heard was not entirely true. Yes, Ice killed Oceankit. Your father did leave me. But Tooth changed, Snowfeather. After capturing that she-cat and your young kit, he fell in love with the she-cat. He became good. He no longer posessed that evil. That she-cat ended up doing wonderous things for him. She *died* for him, she died *with* him. And look at Ice. She is no longer the mean she-cat you saw in the nursery. We've all changed, especially you, Snowfeather."

"What do you mean?" Snowfeather asked.

"Just look at yourself. You're no longer the small and helpless kit in the nursery. You're a triumphant and strong she-cat. You've got cats who care about you in this clan. You have happiness. Why not let it in?" her mother asked.

"I've never really felt happiness before," Snowfeather told her. "Every time I have, it's all been fake, or it's only lasted for so long."

"Then try one last time. Maybe it'll be different. You love this tom, don't you? Maybe happiness will continue to flourish when you're with him, and your friend, Rivertail. Please, just listen to me, Snowfeather."

"I'll try to let it in," Snowfeather told her mother.

"That's my daughter," her mother said. "I'm sorry about the MoonClan confusion too. Though maybe it was all destiny..."

With those words, her mother faded away, and Snowfeather awoke with a lot to think about.

Chapter 33

Snowfeather awoke the next morning with her mother's words still inside her head, and she knew her mother was right. Snowfeather wasn't the helpless kit in the nursery anymore, but a strong she-cat. Why had she not seen it before?

Snowfeather padded outside to see the sun had already risen. They had probably left patrol without her. Why had Rivertail not woken her up?

She padded outside, seeing Nightstar eating a mouse near her den. Snowfeather padded towards her leader, scared to what Nightstar's reaction might be.

"I'm sorry I missed morning patrols. I didn't mean to oversleep. They've already returned, haven't they? I can be on evening," Snowfeather said.

Nightstar tilted her head and stood up. Snowfeather winced. She didn't know what Nightstar would do to her.

Snowfeather was surprised to feel the she-cat's tail gently lay on her shoulder.

"It's fine. We took you off morning today. Rivertail told us what happened yesterday, so we knew you needed to rest. If you really want to be on evening patrol, you can," Nightstar said.

"Oh, yes, I'd enjoy that," Snowfeather said.

"Alright, I'll see you then!" Nightstar said. "I lead that patrol, so don't mess around."

Snowfeather laughed. "I won't." She padded off towards the fresh-kill pile where she saw Rivertail waiting for her with a squirrel. Lionstripe sat with Skyblossom, but he lifted his tail and smiled when he saw her.

"Sleep well?" Rivertail asked, pushing the squirrel towards her.

Snowfeather nodded. "My mother visited me in my sleep last night. I'm no longer upset about seeing my sister," Snowfeather said, taking a bite out of her squirrel.

"That's good," Rivertail told her. "You planning on hunting with Lionstripe today?"

"I'll try," Snowfeather told her. "I woke up to a late start."

"Well, you better hurry. Skyblossom is getting extra close to him today," Rivertail said. "And I think he's enjoying it."

Snowfeather's eyes widened, and she finished her squirrel, padding over to Lionstripe. Skyblossom moved aside, eyeing Snowfeather with anger.

"Want to hunt today?" Snowfeather asked.

"Sure," Lionstripe said. "I'm busy right now though. How about the evening?"

"I have evening patrol, but after we can go," Snowfeather said. "Sound good?"

Lionstripe nodded. "Alright, I'll see you then."

Snowfeather began to pad away, when Lionstripe spoke again. "Hey, Snowfeather!" he said. Snowfeather turned around.

"What?" she asked.

"Keep that smile," he said.

Snowfeather smiled and turned around, padding back to Rivertail. Rivertail let out a laugh as Snowfeather sat down next to her.

"Nice job. I'm sure Skyblossom was about ready to kill you," Rivertail said.

"Who cares?" Snowfeather asked. "What's important is that we're going hunting this evening. I can't wait!"

Rivertail nodded. "Well, good luck with your love story there."

Snowfeather spent the entire day with Rivertail. They played with the kits in the nursery, went hunting, and had fun.

The sun was beginning to descend now, and Rivertail padded into the warriors den to get some rest. She would be going on morning patrol, and she needed her sleep.

"Snowfeather!" Fishstorm's voice yowled, and Snowfeather padded over with the other cats for evening patrol.

As Snowfeather gathered with the rest of the patrol, she felt out of place. She was used to the cats on the morning patrol, not these cats she barely knew the names of.

Before she could complain, however, the patrol took off, and Snowfeather was forced to go with them.

The sun was vanishing as they walked, and Snowfeather knew it would be a matter of time before the stars began to shine. The sky was already beginning to turn an indigo color.

Snowfeather had to admit, the evening patrol was boring, and she hated patrolling in the dark. Cats chatted about their day while Snowfeather walked in the back, looking down at the ground. Each pawstep she took seemed like an eternity, and it was as if the patrol would never end.

Some cats managed to catch a mouse or two, but with leaf-bare on its way, there wasn't much prey to go around. This was odd for Snowfeather. Last leaf-bare, all she had focused on was feeding herself, but now she had a whole clan to feed, which was much more important.

The patrol finally ended by the time the stars lined the sky. Snowfeather arrived back in camp, and she smiled to see Lionstripe waiting for her. She ran to him in joy, and he smiled as she came to

him.

"Ready to go?" he asked.

Snowfeather nodded. "More ready than ever! Let's go!"

Snowfeather and Lionstripe padded back into the forest, though this time it was different. Snowfeather ran around with Lionstripe, though it wasn't much fair with his lightning speed. She laughed and giggled as they went through the forest together. It was hard to believe he might have feelings for Skyblossom.

Snowfeather and Lionstripe casually walked through the forest now, side-by-side. They were out of breath, and they had decided to instead hunt for some food.

"Leaf-bare is coming," Snowfeather said.

"In a moon or so," Lionstripe agreed. "It's hard to believe."

Snowfeather nodded. "Indeed. I can't believe it either. Time flies quickly."

Before he could reply, Lionstripe stopped in his tracks. Before Snowfeather could question why, he sprang, coming back to her with a dead vole.

"Nice catch," Snowfeather told him.

Lionstripe dropped the vole and smiled. "Thanks," he said, beginning to dig a hole to bury it. Once the vole was properly buried, they continued on their way.

No more prey was caught on their walk, though Snowfeather didn't mind. She'd rather be with Lionstripe. It was true. She was in love with him, and she couldn't deny it. She still had horrible thoughts of Bear though and his betrayal. This time was different though. Lionstripe was different. He wasn't like Bear, but he was kind and gentle.

Lionstripe gazed at her oddly, and it was then that Snowfeather realized she had been gazing at him for quite a long

time.

"What?" he asked.

"Nothing," Snowfeather said, turning away.

They continued into the forest, stopping at a nearby hill. The stars twinkled in Snowfeather's eyes, but Lionstripe's too. She sat beside him and rested her head on his shoulder. He purred, and she did too.

They sat for awhile in silence until Snowfeather finally spoke. "You like Skyblossom better than me, don't you?"

She felt Lionstripe stiffen. Suddenly, everything had become awkward. "That's not true," he said.

"Then you like me better?"

Lionstripe moved, beginning to pace around the hill. "I don't know," he said. "Please don't make me make this decision right now, Snowfeather."

"What does that mean?"

"It means I like you both equally, all right? Look, don't bug me about it right now. I knew I would have to make this decision at some point. I just didn't know I'd have to make it so quickly. Please, just let me decide this."

"I'm sorry, and I will," Snowfeather said.

"Let's just head back," Lionstripe told her.

Disappointed, they headed back into the woods, walking near the camp. Snowfeather sighed, afraid Lionstripe maybe loved Skyblossom instead of her. Could it be true? Could this all be for nothing?

They arrived back at camp, and Lionstripe headed straight towards the warriors den. Snowfeather could tell he had a lot to think about.

Rivertail gazed at Snowfeather with confusion. "What was that about?"

"I don't want to talk about it right now," Snowfeather muttered, heading into the warriors den. She walked right past Lionstripe, not wanting to talk to him.

She curled up and laid her head on paws, though sleep couldn't come to her. She laid there, thinking about what Lionstripe's decision would be. She loved him, he should've known that. How was it all going to work out?

Snowfeather spent nearly the whole night wide awake, barely getting any sleep. When the sun had risen, cats began to arise for morning patrol. Rivertail tapped her lightly, though Snowfeather was already awake.

She padded outside with Rivertail, tired. She yawned loudly before grabbing some prey.

As she padded back, Rivertail looked at her, concerned.

"Are you alright? It looks like you got no sleep."

"I didn't," Snowfeather admitted, biting into a mouse.

"Why not? Is this because of Lionstripe? You never did tell me what happened," she said.

Snowfeather nodded weakly. "I have to go talk to him right now," she decided, dropping the mouse. "You can finish that mouse if you want."

Rivertail, still confused, watched Snowfeather head away towards Lionstripe. He sat near the corner of camp eating a squirrel.

"What do you want?" he growled as Snowfeather came over.

"I know you have a lot to think about, and I know this is all hard and sudden, but I need to tell you something," she said.

"What?" Lionstripe asked.

"Lionstripe, I love you! That's what's important! I've loved you since when I first arrived here. I know you probably don't feel the same, but I had to tell you, Lionstripe. I will always love you, no matter what you say," Snowfeather wailed.

Lionstripe stared at her in disbelief, and Snowfeather was about ready to turn away, when he suddenly took a step closer and nuzzled her.

"I love you too," he whispered.

"Y-You do?" Snowfeather asked.

Lionstripe nodded. "I was leaning towards you. I just didn't know what Skyblossom's reaction would be. But now I know I am meant to be with you, and I know I love you."

Snowfeather smiled and purred.

"Snowfeather, will you be my mate?" Lionstripe asked.

Snowfeather stopped in her tracks. She thought of when Bear had asked this, when they were in love. All the memories ran in her head, and she hesitated. "Yes, I will," she said.

Lionstripe smiled. "I'm so happy! I have to go break the news to Skyblossom now. I'll see you later."

Snowfeather nodded. "See you," she said, heading over to Rivertail.

Rivertail smiled at her. "So..."

"We're mates," Snowfeather told her.

Rivertail nearly coughed up her mouse. "That's great! Congratulations, Snowfeather!" she said, smiling at her friend.

Snowfeather smiled too, though she was afraid, afraid that Lionstripe would leave her just like Bear had.

So, what do you guys think? Were you shipping this couple all the way? Are you happy they're mates? I am lol

Chapter 34

Snowfeather awoke to Lionstripe gently touching her with his tail. She smiled at him as she got up, just like every morning.

It had been a moon since the two had become mates. Skyblossom, angered, fully avoided Snowfeather, Lionstripe, and Rivertail. Snowfeather had tried to talk to her, though Skyblossom refused to discuss the subject. When Snowfeather had turned to Rivertail for guidance, Rivertail had replied, "It is best for her. She'll find her mate soon enough."

Now that Skyblossom was out of the picture, Snowfeather was having the time of her life. She had Lionstripe, her beloved mate, all to herself, and her best friend, Rivertail. She couldn't believe how great it felt to be loved, for she had never truly experienced it before.

"Ready to go on morning patrol?" Lionstripe asked.

Snowfeather nodded. She padded outside with Lionstripe, and together, they padded over to Rivertail who nibbled on a squirrel. Snowfeather had to admit that she missed the days Rivertail would wake her up and share a meal with her.

But time had moved forward, just like it always did. Lionstripe had not come in between Rivertail and Snowfeather, for Snowfeather made sure that she spended an equal amount of time with both. She only wondered how long it would last though...

Lionstripe grabbed a mouse for him and Snowfeather to share, and the two sat in the camp, discussing what might happen on morning patrol.

"Probably just Fishstorm screaming at the apprentices," Rivertail muttered.

"He does like to do that," Snowfeather admitted. "Maybe we'll find the largest mouse of them all today."

"I doubt it," Lionstripe said. "Leaf-fall is almost over. Leaf-bare will be approaching soon."

"Don't remind me," Rivertail muttered.

Snowfeather did not reply though. She thought back to the first snowfall she ever experienced. She had been hiding from Wavekit, and the snow had provided excellent camouflage for her.

"It's not that bad," Snowfeather admitted. "The snow and all. I know how to find prey during leaf-bare."

"How?" Lionstripe asked.

"By digging up the snow. The animals are burrowed, and sometimes, they fling out when you uncover their burrow. It was how I kept myself fed all winter," Snowfeather told him.

"What about the other cats in your clan?"

Snowfeather stiffened. Rivertail and Lionstripe still did not know all about her past, and she knew she needed to tell them soon. The more she waited, the more betrayed they would feel. "I—"

She was cut off by Fishstorm. "ALL CATS FOR MORNING PATROL, COME ON!" he shouted.

"Why is he so grumpy all the time?" Snowfeather muttered.

"Because his fur is too thin to keep him warm for leaf-bare," Lionstripe joked. This made Snowfeather and Rivertail laugh.

They continued through the woods, and Snowfeather shivered a little as the wind flew against her pelt. Almost all the leaves had fallen off the trees, and Snowfeather could tell the first snowflake would fall soon.

Rivertail shivered a little beside her, and Snowfeather brushed her pelt against her friend, attempting to keep her warm. Rivertail gave a warm smile as they continued on.

The patrol was even more boring than it usually was. There were no borders to remark, no prey to be found, and Fishstorm seemed to be in the worst mood he had ever been. Just as they were about to turn around, a sudden yowl made Snowfeather jump.

She turned, seeing five or so cats beginning to surround the patrol. One was a dark black whose yellow eyes seemed to gaze into Snowfeather's soul. She froze, remembering BloodClan. Lionstripe took a step in front of her, hissing.

"Pantherstar!" Fishstorm spat, unsheathing his claws. "What are you doing in MoonClan borders?!"

"Isn't it obvious, Fishstorm?" the black tom asked, walking past the cats who stood frozen in fear. "We're taking back what's rightfully ours," the tom spoke.

"MoonClan and DuskClan have lived in peace for years," Fishstorm told him. "Why is it you want our territory now?"

Snowfeather stood, confused. Who were these cats? She didn't know there was a DuskClan in the forest. It made no sense.

Lionstripe still stood in front of Snowfeather, glaring at

Pantherstar. Pantherstar's yellow eyes gazed at Snowfeather's again, then he turned, facing Fishstorm.

"You do recall the last time we took over, do you not?" Pantherstar asked.

Fishstorm gulped. "I remember."

Snowfeather felt Rivertail stiffen beside her, and she turned, facing her friend who shook in fear.

"Well, we've been working, Fishstorm. We've been working very hard, and we plan to take over your forest soon," Pantherstar spoke. "You have two choices, either surrender and become our slaves, or die."

Snowfeather pushed Lionstripe aside, hissing, "Never!"

Cats looked at her in shock, as did Lionstripe. Snowfeather was not scared of this cat though. She felt as if her BloodClan experience gave her courage. This cat was no worse than a BloodClan cat.

"What a brave kitty here," Pantherstar laughed. "What's your name?" he asked.

"Snowfeather," she growled.

"Snowfeather," Lionstripe pleaded, trying to drag her back. Snowfeather refused to move though. She watched as Pantherstar seemed to circle her. She stood tall, not scared of the tom.

"My, you seem to be fearless. You aren't from here, are you?" Pantherstar asked. "I've never seen such a brave MoonClan cat before."

"No, I'm not from here," Snowfeather told him.

"Where are you from then?" Pantherstar asked.

Snowfeather gulped. "BloodClan..."

Cats gasped, and Snowfeather couldn't dare to look back at Lionstripe to see what his expression was.

Pantherstar laughed. "BloodClan, very good. But you aren't there, are you? Why are you here in MoonClan?"

"That's none of your business," Snowfeather spat. "All I know is that you can't take over this clan, and if you do—"

"And if I do, what? None of your fellow clanmates are brave enough to fight against us. Face it, BloodClan cat, you're the only one," he said, pushing her to the ground. She felt Lionstripe step forward, hearing his growl, though Snowfeather quickly pushed the tom off, hissing.

Pantherstar turned to Fishstorm now. "Go tell your pathetic

Nightstar our plan. We'll be back in a moon," he said, disappearing with his clanmates.

Fishstorm sighed in relief, though Snowfeather watched as all the cats glared at her.

"Come on," Lionstripe said, leading her away back to camp.

"I'm confused," Snowfeather whispered. "Who were those cats?"

"No, I'm confused," Lionstripe told her, facing her. "You're a BloodClan cat?! Why didn't you tell me?"

"I'm not a BloodClan cat," Snowfeather told him. "And...I don't know. You have to trust me on this. Look, I'll explain everything to you if you just explain this DuskClan to me."

"Alright, fine," Lionstripe muttered. "When we were kits, DuskClan took over. Pantherstar was their new leader, and he believed we were soft-hearted kittypets who did not deserve this forest. He tried to attack, and several died in battle, but we were able to overthrow them...barely. We put up the rocks around our camp to try to keep them out. They haven't bugged us in moons, but now...We'll just see what Nightstar does."

"That makes more sense," Snowfeather muttered.

"Now what's with this BloodClan stuff?" Lionstripe asked. Rivertail, who stood next to her, nodded.

"Yeah, why didn't you tell us?"

Snowfeather sighed. "I'm not a cruel BloodClan cat, I assure you." She begin to explain her whole story, how she was exiled as a kit, how she almost died. She explained Oceankit and Wavekit, the StarClan cats, though she left out Bear, and she explained how StarClan told her to travel to MoonClan in search of her family. Little did she know that she had gone to the wrong one.

"So you're not a vicious BloodClan cat?" Lionstripe asked.

"No!" Snowfeather told him. "Neither was my mother. My siblings and my father...that's a different story. That's why I was so upset when I saw my sister. It seemed she and my father didn't change. I guess my brother did though..."

"That's good though, isn't it?" Rivertail asked.

"But he's dead. He died for a good cause...I-please, you have to get the others to believe me," Snowfeather begged.

"CATS OF MOONCLAN!" Nightstar's yowl rang across the camp.

Cats turned to their leader, hoping for a solution to the

problem. Snowfeather noticed the worry on Nightstar's aged face, and she sighed.

"I have heard that Pantherstar has made a return, and I have heard that one of our cats is not who they say they are," Nightstar muttered. "We cannot back down or surrender. If we are not threatened any longer, we will fight for this clan. I can only hope we will survive..."

"Snowfeather," she spoke, her eyes gazing at Snowfeather in disgust. "I have heard you are a BloodClan cat."

Snowfeather nodded. "You are correct," she said. The whole clan fell silent as they listened to the two talking. "But I am not who you think I am. Yes, I was born in BloodClan, but to a loving mother. I was different from the others, Nightstar. I was exiled as a kit."

"Is it then you joined SnowClan?"

Snowfeather shook her head. "No, Nightstar. I was trained to be a warrior by StarClan cats. Call me insane, but it's true. They taught me herbs, fighting, and hunting skills. Please, you must believe me. I promise I am not a vicious BloodClan cat like you think I am..."

"I believe you for now," Nightstar told her. "But if you get out of line, I'm not afraid to exile you. Do you understand?"

"Yes, Nightstar," Snowfeather told her.

The cats left, still glaring at Snowfeather. Snowfeather could not believe how quickly her new life had fallen apart. Lionstripe rested his tail on her shoulder. "No matter what your history is, I still love you," he told her.

"And no matter what clan you're from, you'll always be my friend," Rivertail told her.

Snowfeather smiled, but something told her that MoonClan would be coming to an end very soon...

Chapter 35

Time had passed since DuskClan's threat. Leaf-bare was almost upon the forest now, and Snowfeather could tell by the bare trees and the cold skies that the first snowflake would fall in a matter of days.

Snowfeather would've liked to believe MoonClan had stopped DuskClan, but she couldn't. Several minor attacks had come and gone over the past weeks. A cat would be injured here and there, they would trespass, nothing big, but Snowfeather sensed they would be back soon. A moon had almost gone by, and Snowfeather still remembered how the words had chilled her.

Snowfeather tried to focus on the positives. She still had Lionstripe and Rivertail, the cats she couldn't bear to lose. Would she lose them though to DuskClan?

Snowfeather awoke to find the clouds gray. A cold wind swept across the camp, making her shiver. Not a single raindrop fell, and Snowfeather gazed up at the swirling gray clouds, wondering if a snowflake would fall.

She felt Lionstripe creep up beside her. He wrapped his tail around her and purred, though Snowfeather did not purr back. She sighed, turning to Lionstripe.

"What's wrong?" he asked.

"DuskClan," she murmured. "It's nearly been a moon. You heard what they said, Lionstripe. They'll be back soon, I can feel it. I don't want to lose you or Rivertail."

"You won't, I promise," Lionstripe told her. "Don't worry, Snowfeather. We still have a few sunrises left. Nightstar will think of something."

"But what about all the attacks?" Snowfeather asked. "None of us have had the guts to step on morning patrol for weeks!"

"Maybe we will today," Lionstripe said. "Please, Snowfeather. Don't worry. Everything will be fine."

"Alright," Snowfeather said, gazing down.

"Do you want to share a squirrel?" Lionstripe asked.

Snowfeather shook her head. "I'm not that hungry. You can though," Snowfeather said.

He shrugged and headed towards the fresh-kill pile, leaving Snowfeather alone in the camp. The winds picked up some more now, and Snowfeather gazed at the clouds again. She felt footsteps behind her, and she turned, seeing Rivertail.

"Hey," Snowfeather said.

Rivertail did not give a reply back. Her eyes drooped from lack of sleep, and she moved slowly as if her whole body ached.

"Are you alright, Rivertail?" Snowfeather asked.

"Fine," Rivertail grumbled. "I'm heading on morning patrol today. Are you coming, Snowfeather?"

Snowfeather shook her head. "Not until we settle the DuskClan dispute."

"Alright," Rivertail said, heading towards the small group of cats gathered for the morning patrol.

"Rivertail, wait," Snowfeather said. The tabby she-cat turned around, gazing at Snowfeather. "Please stay safe," Snowfeather pleaded. The she-cat nodded then headed with the rest of the cats.

With nothing else to do, Snowfeather headed over towards Lionstripe who nibbled on a squirrel. As Snowfeather sat down next to him, he looked up. "Rivertail's going on morning patrol?"

Snowfeather nodded. "I hope she stays safe. Do you mind if I have some of that squirrel? I think I need to eat something."

"Sure," Lionstripe said, pushing the half-eaten piece of prey towards her. Snowfeather only nibbled at a little, enough to sustain her for awhile, before pushing it back to Lionstripe who finished the rest.

Snowfeather and Lionstripe sat in camp for awhile, talking to each other every once in awhile. There wasn't much to say, really.

Time passed, and Snowfeather got up, about to head to the den to rest. The sound of frantic footsteps and moving of leaves made her turn around. Rivertail burst into camp, blood dripping from her face. A few wounds were present on her pelt, dried blood crusted on her fur.

"It's DuskClan! A group of cats are attacking! They're heading to camp!" she yowled. Cats begin to screech and panic until Nightstar let out a large yowl.

"SILENCE!" she hissed. "Get the queens, kits, and elders out of here! Warriors and apprentices need to fight!"

Snowfeather watched as elders helped carry kits. Queens

rushed their kits out of the camp, worried expressions fully present on their face.

Snowfeather turned to Lionstripe in horror. He opened his mouth to say something, only to shut it moments later.

As the last elders and queens got out, Snowfeather heard a large yowl, only to find several DuskClan cats climb up the tall rocks that protected the camp. They hissed and yowled, their claws unsheathed.

Snowfeather leapt at a cat, hissing. The cat pushed her down, leaving a claw streak on her pelt. She yowled in pain then pushed the cat into the rock wall, knocking the cat unconscious. With red blood staining her white pelt, she turned, trying to find Rivertail or Lionstripe.

Rivertail was nowhere to be found, though she found Lionstripe fighting with a larger tom. Snowfeather raced towards the large DuskClan tom, knocking him away from Lionstripe.

"Thanks," Lionstripe breathed. "Where's Rivertail?"

Snowfeather shrugged.

"We've got to get out of here," Lionstripe told her.

"No, we have to fight for MoonClan!" Snowfeather argued.

"It's no use, Snowfeather. Come on," Lionstripe said. Snowfeather wouldn't budge though. Instead, she turned in the other direction, looking for Rivertail.

She felt Lionstripe follow her, not arguing with her this time. As they padded by, Snowfeather turned away in disgust The dead body of Skyblossom lay in a pile of blood. Her eyes were faint and unseeing. She felt Lionstripe turn, and she spoke slowly, "No, Lionstripe. Don't look."

Snowfeather turned, seeing that the MoonClan cats had found a secret weapon--the rocks. Cats slammed DuskClan cats into the rocks, and Snowfeather turned, seeing Pantherstar crouched on top of a rock, watching the battle below.

Coward, she thought.

"ENOUGH!" Pantherstar hissed. Cats continued to fight, making Pantherstar hiss again. "THAT'S ENOUGH, I SAY!" he yowled. Cats slowly stopped fighting, and he leaped down from the rock.

"Pantherstar," Nightstar growled.

"Did you like our little attack?" Pantherstar asked.

"You're nothing but a coward, calling off the attack. We

could've taken you!" she hissed.

"I did not call it off because we were losing," Pantherstar said, gazing at all the cats who stood frozen in fear. "I called it off for the sake of your clanmates. Look at them, they're dying, Nightstar. This was just a little...prelude perhaps to what the real battle will be like in a few sunrises."

Nightstar growled. "Get out of here, Pantherstar, and all your little DuskClan slaves too."

"Very well," Pantherstar spoke. He said something to the clanmates that Snowfeather couldn't quite catch, and the remaining cats leapt over the rocks like they had done before. "We'll be back in three sunrises," he said.

Nightstar stood in shock, about to fall from exhaustion. Rivertail leapt to her side, and Snowfeather turned, seeing Fishstorm's deformed body crumbled by some rocks.

"What do we do, Nightstar?!" Cats called out.

Nightstar sighed. "It is what I never wanted to happen. MoonClan is finished..."

Cats called out in gasps, and so did Snowfeather. She turned to Lionstripe, seeing the shock on his face. She could imagine how terrible it felt. This was his home that he had grown up in, and now, it was gone.

"Go off on your own, I guess," Nightstar muttered. "If you want to continue the clan, do your best. I'm leaving it up to Rivertail."

Rivertail's eyes widened. "You're putting the fate of the clan on *my* shoulders?!"

Normally, Rivertail would've been excited about this, but now, Snowfeather suspected she did not want anything to do with it.

"I accept, Nightstar," Rivertail said.

Snowfeather turned to Lionstripe. "Where do we go? Are we going to continue with the clan?"

Lionstripe shook his head. "That would be a suicide mission. Look, I heard of a clan far from here. I've heard other cats talk about it from time to time, especially at gatherings. It's called FoxClan."

FoxClan, wasn't that one of the clans going up against MoonClan? It must've been near SnowClan. Snowfeather nodded. "I've heard of that clan too. How long will it be to get there?"

Lionstripe shrugged, then smiled. "You've forgotten that I have lightning speed, Snowfeather. We could be there in less than a moon."

Snowfeather smiled. "Perfect." Her smile faded though as she saw Rivertail. She padded over to her friend whose wounds had stopped bleeding now. Snowfeather looked at her own pelt, seeing dried blood stained on her pelt.

"Rivertail," Snowfeather said. "Are you sure you can do this?"

"Nightstar has trusted me," Rivertail said. "Are you coming, Snowfeather?"

Snowfeather shook her head. "I'm afraid not, but I wish you the best of luck, Rivertail. I'll miss you..."

"I'll miss you too, Snowfeather. You're the best friend I've ever had," Rivertail spoke, tears forming in her eyes. A single tear dropped to the ground, and she turned, padding away.

Snowfeather felt Lionstripe stand next to her, and as they walked, Snowfeather looked up, seeing the first snowflake swirl down from the sky. Leaf-bare had arrived...

Chapter 36

Snowfeather padded across the snowy ground with Lionstripe by her side. Small snowflakes drifted down, landing on her white pelt. Though they blended in with hers, they stood out on Lionstripe's, and she watched him shake some off.

For nearly seven sunrises now they had been traveling to FoxClan. Snow covered the ground now, leaf-bare taking its toll on the forest. At times, Lionstripe would use his lightning speed, and Snowfeather would grip onto his back as he did so. It would tire him though, and from time to time, they would travel regularly, like now.

Snowfeather wasn't sure where they were going, though Lionstripe assured her he knew the way. Snowfeather wasn't quite sure though, hoping StarClan would send her some sign that they were close.

The wind picked up a little, making Snowfeather shiver. She felt Lionstripe next to her, and this made her smile. She knew now that he was nothing like Bear. He never left her, always asked what she wanted, and loved her with affection. She was blessed to have a mate like him.

"The snow is pretty, isn't it?" Snowfeather asked, looking up at the swirling specks.

"Not when your pelt is covered in it," Lionstripe said, shaking off his pelt again. "It's like you live in the snow."

Snowfeather laughed. "Well, I did train in the snow, didn't I? I'm more used to it than you. Plus, I blend in better."

"Alright, I guess you got me there," Lionstripe said. "So, are you excited for FoxClan?"

Snowfeather shrugged. "I don't know. I guess I'm still in

shock about MoonClan. It was a great clan. You were right about leaving though. There was no way we could have gone with them. It would be suicide. I just hope Rivertail is doing alright."

Lionstripe nodded. "The problem with MoonClan is that all the clan wanted was peace. Unfortunately, that rarely exists in the world today. A clan or a wild animal would come from somewhere eventually. In this case, DuskClan."

Snowfeather nodded. Her stomach growled, and she turned, hoping to find some sort of prey. "Why don't we stop here to hunt?" she asked.

"How?" Lionstripe asked. "It's *snowing*. Why would there be prey out?"

"I know a trick," Snowfeather said, trying to pick up any scent she could. When she smelled a stale mouse scent, she dug in the snow, uncovering a hole. She dug her paw in, a mouse leaping out of the hole. Lionstripe caught it and killed it, smiling.

"Where'd you learn that?"

"StarClan," Snowfeather said. "They're all burrowing, so the trick is to dig for their holes."

"Smart," Lionstripe said. Together, they sat underneath a tree as the snow fell, sharing the one mouse Snowfeather had caught. It was relief, only having to supply food for two cats. She couldn't imagine what it would've been like in MoonClan trying to find food for the whole clan.

They got up, beginning to walk again. Lionstripe hesitated for a moment, then continued to walk.

"Are you alright?" Snowfeather asked, changing into mist as she appeared in front of him.

"I think I'm ready to run again," he said.

"Are you sure?" Snowfeather asked. "I don't want you getting hurt, Lionstripe. You should rest more."

"I'm fine. I can do this," Lionstripe said.

"I can transport us from place to place," Snowfeather suggested.

"You'd only be able to transport us to someplace twenty pawsteps away, Snowfeather. It's alright. Get onto my back," he said.

Sighing, Snowfeather crawled onto his back, gripping onto his fur with her claws. He let out a quick yelp, then took off, speeding through the forest. Snow flew into Snowfeather's eyes, and she wondered if this was a good idea.

Lionstripe didn't make it too far before she felt him stiffen. He then collapsed in the snow, Snowfeather being thrown off him. She appeared beside him as she slowly got up.

"Lionstripe, are you alright?!" she asked.

"Fine," he grumbled, standing on all fours again. "Should we try that again?"

"No," Snowfeather snapped. "You're hurting yourself, Lionstripe. We'll walk normally. You can try again tomorrow," she said.

Lionstripe sighed, finally agreeing to her. The two padded side-by-side through the forest. The snow had stopped now, a sun shining up ahead. Snowfeather smiled as she walked, feeling the icy substance under her paws.

"Lionstripe," she said softly.

"What?" he asked. He still looked in pain from attempting to run again.

"Maybe we should stop here and rest for a while," she suggested.

"Snowfeather, I'm not a kit. We'll be fine," he said, continuing to walk. Transforming into mist, she appeared in front of

him again, stopping him in his tracks.

"Please, Lionstripe. You're in pain, I can tell. I don't want you getting hurt. I love you, Lionstripe, and I'd die if something ever happened to you," she said.

Lionstripe sighed. "I love you too. Alright, let's stop by that log over there," he said. She nodded, laying against a log with him. He rested his head on his paws, finally looking free from pain.

"Lionstripe," she murmured.

"What?" he asked, his eyes shut as he attempted to rest.

"You won't leave me, right?" she asked. She had never confronted him about Bear before, but now, she thought it was time.

"No! Why would you ever think that?!" he exclaimed, raising his head.

"Because...I had a mate before you...who left me," she said slowly.

"Why didn't you tell me this before?" Lionstripe asked.

"It was private, and I thought it would happen again. But now, I don't think it will," Snowfeather said.

"Look, Snowfeather," Lionstripe began. "Whoever that tom was is a piece of fox dung, hurting you like that. I'm not that kind of tom. I will stay by you and love you until the day I die. You'll never have to worry about me leaving you."

"And you won't have to worry about me leaving you," she purred, nuzzling the tom. She rested her head against his, Bear gone from her mind. She doubted he would ever enter it again.

The two napped and rested for awhile until Lionstripe had the strength to move again. When he did, they headed through the forest together, the snow becoming hard under Snowfeather's feet.

As they walked, Snowfeather stopped, hearing a faint sound coming from behind her. She turned but saw nothing, continuing her way.

She kept walking until she heard the sound of something walking through a bush. She caught something go by out of the corner of her eye, and she stopped, whispering to Lionstripe, "Someone is following us..."

Lionstripe turned, gasping. Snowfeather hadn't turned, and she didn't want to. "Snowfeather," he said slowly. "FOX!"

Snowfeather turned, seeing an angry fox growling at them. It's teeth were bared, and it leapt for Snowfeather. She appeared behind it, clawing at its pelt. It screeched as Lionstripe ran around it. The fox attempted to follow Lionstripe with its head, though it was no use. Lionstripe's speed was too much for it.

The fox threw Snowfeather off, and she hit the ground hard, her back aching. She stood up though, appearing to the side of it again. Lionstripe leapt at the fox this time, biting its leg. The fox shoved it off, not willing to give up the fight.

It charged at Snowfeather this time, and before she could move, it had grabbed her with its teeth. Snowfeather yelped as its teeth sunk into her fur. She tried to transform into mist, but she was in too much pain.

Lionstripe leapt at the fox, though it wouldn't let go of Snowfeather. She felt herself getting weaker each second. Lionstripe clawed at its muzzle, and it let go, dropping Snowfeather into the snow. She attempted to get up, but her legs faltered, and she collapsed in the snow. She groaned as red blood stained the white snow, and she watched, seeing Lionstripe continuing to fight off the fox.

She closed her eyes, hearing Lionstripe's yowl. "No, Snowfeather! Stay awake!" he hissed. Snowfeather opened them, seeing the fox had gone, leaving the bloody Lionstripe.

"Oh no," he murmured. "StarClan, no."

Snowfeather could barely move her body now, and she watched as Lionstripe lifted her onto his back.

"Don't worry. I'll get you to FoxClan," he told her.

She felt him move with lightning speed. It seemed to take all his strength, though he kept running.

"Cobwebs and marigold," she coughed. "Find them..."

But she began to fall into darkness now, and she knew no plants would be in bloom. She could only hope Lionstripe would reach FoxClan soon enough...

Chapter 37

Snowfeather awoke, feeling weak. Her stomach grumbled, and her throat was parched. She looked up, seeing a light snow falling up ahead. A tree hung over her, allowing her to remain dry as the snow fell.

She looked at her wound, seeing cobwebs were placed on top of it. The bleeding had stopped, and she looked at it with curiosity. She did not feel as much pain as before, though touching it resulted in sharp pain that spread through her body.

She looked around, not spotting Lionstripe at all. Where had he gone? Where was she? She knew she wasn't in FoxClan, obviously. She was somewhere in the forest.

With all the might she could, she stood up and leaned against the tree, shutting her eyes tight as pain spread through her.

"You're awake," she heard.

Snowfeather opened her eyes, seeing Lionstripe with some cobwebs. "Where am I?" she asked.

"We're a day's walk from FoxClan," he told her, grabbing some cobwebs off her pelt and replacing them with some new ones. Snowfeather gagged at her wounds he dressed them, but she was relieved from pain as he did so.

"What happened? How long was I asleep?" she asked.

"About two days," Lionstripe told her. "I couldn't find any marigold, but I happened to find some cobwebs. I've been running day and night."

"Aren't you tired?" Snowfeather asked.

Lionstripe nodded. "Of course, but, you were about to die, Snowfeather. I had to save you. I had just enough love to provide

all that energy."

Snowfeather smiled. "You probably wouldn't find marigold anyway," she told him. "It only blooms from new-leaf to leaf-fall."

"I assumed that," Lionstripe said. "So I found this," he said, pulling out a small and frail plant with small yellow flowers blooming from it.

"Goldenrod," Snowfeather breathed. "It heals wounds too. Where did you find this?"

"A meadow nearby. The snow hadn't covered all of it yet, and I happened to find a piece still alive. Do you know how to apply it?"

Snowfeather nodded. "I was trained with all these herbs. Of course I do. You must chew it to a poultice then apply it to the wound."

Lionstripe nodded, beginning to chew the flower. Once he had done so, he pressed it to Snowfeather's wounds. She gave a sharp cry from the sting, then sighed as she felt relief.

"Have you found anymore?" she asked.

Lionstripe shook his head. "If we get to FoxClan by tonight, they'll be able to tend to you."

Snowfeather nodded. "Alright. I'll see if I can walk," she said, standing on all fours. Her legs were wobbly, and she felt they might buckle beneath her. Luckily, Lionstripe stood next to her, allowing him to lean on her side.

"I would run," he told her. "But all my energy is gone, obviously. We'll be fine with a day's walk."

Snowfeather nodded. "I'm starving and thirsty. Did you catch anything?"

"That's right," Lionstripe said, pulling out a dead squirrel. He pushed it towards her, a smile on his face. "I followed your

advice and caught this squirrel," he said.

"Thanks," Snowfeather said, quickly gobbling it up. As for water, she ate some snow, the cool substance relieving her parched throat.

"I think I can walk now," she told Lionstripe, walking on her own a little.

"If you need help, just let me know," Lionstripe told her. "I'll be here to assist you."

Snowfeather smiled. "Thank you, Lionstripe," she said, beginning to walk through the woods with him. The snow had stopped now, but gray clouds still loomed up ahead, and she wondered if another snow shower would hit.

"Has it snowed much?" she asked.

"No, not much," Lionstripe told her. "If I had snowed a great amount, I wouldn't have been able to find that goldenrod. I expect a snowstorm will come in soon...which is why we need to get to FoxClan tonight."

Snowfeather nodded, trying to pick up her pace.

"Don't harm yourself, now," Lionstripe said. "We'll be there in plenty of time. You need to keep your strength up," he told her.

Snowfeather nodded. "Alright," she said, walking at a comfortable pace.

The two walked side by side in the forest. Snowfeather remembered walking through snowy woods back with Stonecloud and Silverwhisker. She remembered the miraculous light that Stonecloud had brought to reveal the plants. Snowfeather wished she could go back to that when times had been simpler.

No, she was glad she was here now. She had a loving mate, even though she'd gone through terrible circumstances to get where she was today. She wondered if this was all part of StarClan's plan for her.

Snowfeather thought back now to when she thought StarClan had abandoned her. Those days were dark, and she was glad to escape from them. Lionstripe had been her miracle, her gift from StarClan.

"What?" Lionstripe asked.

Snowfeather suddenly realized she had been staring at him intently.

"Nothing," she grinned, looking away. A smile was still lit on her face though.

She felt Lionstripe shove her lightly. "What?" he asked again.

"Nothing," she laughed. "I was just thinking..."

"About what?"

"You," she said.

Lionstripe's eyes gleamed, and he raced ahead of her, laughing. Snowfeather, now able to use her powers, transported in front of him, laughing.

"You can't catch me!" she laughed, transporting on a nearby branch.

"Want to bet?" Lionstripe asked, racing up the tree.

Snowfeather laughed, appearing below the tree now. "Looks like you've got yourself in a tough situation there, Lionstripe."

Lionstripe laughed. "I'm a bit jealous of your power, Snowfeather," he said, racing down the tree and circling her.

Snowfeather laughed, pawing at him lightly. Together they collapsed at the snow, smiling. Snowfeather could barely feel her wound now, and it barely stung anymore. It sure didn't hold her back anymore.

They then raced through the forest, laughing and smiling. They were acting like young kits playing in the nursery, something Snowfeather had only witnessed, never experiencing.

For the rest of the day, they maintained a constant pace. Near the afternoon, Snowfeather's wound had begun to sting again, though without any goldenrod, they had to continue through the woods.

Lionstripe kept her company though, allowing her to rest on him every once in awhile as they walked. Dark clouds covered the skies, and Snowfeather knew a blizzard would be on them soon as the wind picked up.

"We haven't got that much longer," Snowfeather told him.

"It's just up this hill," Lionstripe promised, gazing up at the white hill up ahead. A few snow covered trees sat on top, and with all the strength she could, Snowfeather managed to make it up the hill.

She was tired, weak, and hungry though. Eating snow couldn't cure all of her parched throat. She wanted to collapse on the hill, but she had to keep going. She had to make it to FoxClan with Lionstripe. She could get help there, and they could spend their lives in peace.

Now standing at the top, she collapsed in the snow, tired. The first snowflakes fell, following more. Lionstripe ran to her side, shoving her.

"Snowfeather, are you alright? Maybe you can transport there," he offered.

Snowfeather got to her fours. "No, I can't. I'm weak," she said, her knees buckling. She felt Lionstripe place her on his back, beginning to march down the hill.

Snow fell faster now, the winds blowing it into her fur. She hung onto Lionstripe, her wound aching. She needed help to her wounds. She looked, seeing they had to begun to bleed again. They

had no time to stop for herbs though. With the blizzard coming down on them, they had to get to FoxClan.

She felt Lionstripe pick up his pace now, beginning to use his powers to race through the forest. Snowfeather shivered as the snow blew quickly, though Lionstripe kept moving.

She suddenly felt him halt, and Snowfeather opened her eyes, seeing cats stare at them in horror.

"Is this FoxClan?!" Lionstripe frantically asked.

An older ginger she-cat nodded. "Yes, this is."

Lionstripe slowly laid Snowfeather down on the ground. "We're here to join. She must get to the medicine cat first though. Her wounds are beginning to bleed again."

Snowfeather watched as a gray tabby she-cat slowly began to pull Snowfeather against the snowy ground. She saw Lionstripe's green eyes gaze at her one last time before she was pulled into a den.

Snowfeather winced in pain as herbs were applied, though soon, her wounds felt better, and her stomach growled.

"Food," Snowfeather weakly told the she-cat.

The she-cat, whom Snowfeather assumed was the medicine cat, came back with a mouse. She still tended to Snowfeather's wounds, occasionally providing Snowfeather with some water which she drank quickly.

"I'm Mistyfall, by the way," the she-cat told her. "FoxClan's medicine cat. And you are?"

"Snowfeather," she told her.

The cat nodded. "You're lucky I was able to get to your wounds in time. They were getting irritated. You're here to join, aren't you?"

Snowfeather nodded. "Yes. I've been traveling here."

"Is that other tom your mate?" Mistyfall asked.

Snowfeather nodded. "Yes, the tom is Lionstripe, my mate."

"Why don't you get some rest now," Mistyfall told her. "I'll bring him in later to see you."

Snowfeather nodded. "Sure," she said, closing her eyes. She slowly drifted off into a deep sleep, hearing the howling winds of the blizzard behind her.

Chapter 38

Snowfeather awoke in the morning to find little snowflakes dancing in the sky. She turned to her wound, seeing it looked much better than the day before. Mistyfall stood by her side.

"Good morning," she purred.

"Good morning," Snowfeather spoke. "Have you seen Lionstripe?"

Mistyfall nodded. "He came in last night to check on you. He stayed with you for awhile and whispered to you, not that you probably remember it."

Snowfeather nodded, having no recollection of Lionstripe's visit.

"I was actually just about to go get him now that you've awoken," Mistyfall told her. "Would that be alright?"

Snowfeather nodded. "That would be fine, thank you."

Mistyfall exited the den, leaving Snowfeather alone. Being trapped in this den reminded Snowfeather of BloodClan when she was forced to remain in the nursery while her siblings got to explore with her father.

Hearing the sound of footsteps, she lifted her head, seeing Lionstripe pad in. "You're awake," he told her.

Snowfeather nodded. "You don't look much awake," she said, seeing his red, swollen eyes.

"I didn't get much sleep last night," he told her, sitting down next to her. "I was a bit too worried about you."

"Well, you needn't worry anymore," Mistyfall told him. "Her wound is healing. She can probably walk around by now. Try

getting up, Snowfeather."

Snowfeather nodded. She pushed on her back legs, standing up pain-free. She smiled, remembering how standing up before had resulted in a sharp pain.

"I feel great," Snowfeather admitted.

Mistyfall smiled. "I hear Sunstar wants to announce your arrival to the clan. You two should probably head to her den. It's the next den over," Mistyfall told them.

"Thanks," Lionstripe dipped his head, exiting out of the den with Snowfeather.

"I didn't realize you visited me last night," Snowfeather admitted.

"Who told you?"

"Mistyfall," Snowfeather smiled.

"I was worried about you," Lionstripe admitted. "I was afraid you were going to..." His voice trailed off, and Snowfeather realized what he was going to say.

"I'm fine, Lionstripe, honestly. I could probably transport if I wanted to. Not that I will. It'd be odd showing my powers in the new clan," Snowfeather told him.

Lionstripe nodded, stopping in front of Sunstar's den. He peeked his head through. "Sunstar?" he asked.

The older ginger she-cat turned, her green eyes staring at both of them. "Come in, come in!" she announced, allowing the two to come in.

"Welcome, Snowfeather," she said. "It's good to meet you. We've met already, Lionstripe."

Lionstripe nodded. "Sunstar has offered to take us around to tour."

"I'd love that," Snowfeather smiled.

"First, we need to show you to the clan," Sunstar told her. "Follow me," she said, leading them to a large rock in their clan. It reminded Snowfeather of MoonClan, and the rock she once stood on as she was being presented.

Lionstripe followed Snowfeather, giving her a bit more courage than usual. Together, they stood, looking down at the clan.

FoxClan was much smaller than Snowfeather imagined. They only had about half as many cats as MoonClan, though she wasn't complaining. It was hard to imagine how they had fought in battle though. Perhaps that was why there were so few.

"CATS OF FOXCLAN!" Sunstar's yowl boomed through the camp. "Today, I bring two cats who have traveled a great distance to join FoxClan. There names are Snowfeather and Lionstripe. Since the battle, we've been in great need of clan members, and now we are fortunate enough to have found some willing members. Please welcome them!"

"SNOWFEATHER! LIONSTRIPE!" The clan cheered.

It reminded Snowfeather of the time she had received her warrior name. Stonecloud, Silverwhisker, and all of StarClan had cheered for her. This felt more real though, more exciting.

Once the crowd had cleared, the two descended down with Sunstar. "Now, we are a bit short on clanmates, but I'd like you to meet some of them," she said.

She padded towards a young orange tom. His eyes were an ember green, even brighter than Lionstripe's.

"This is my son, Embertail. He is deputy of FoxClan," she told them.

Snowfeather dipped her head she met the tom, and the two continued on to the warriors section. They stumbled upon a black she-cat with striking green eyes.

"I'm Hollyfur," she said.

Snowfeather nodded, continuing on. She froze as she saw a gray tabby tom and a white tom speaking to each other.

"I'm Rainwhisker, and this is Cloudfoot," the gray tabby tom said.

Snowfeather froze. "You two aren't from here, are you?"

Cloudfoot tilted his head. "I'm not sure how you would've guessed. We don't like to talk about our past a lot. We're both former MoonClan cats."

Snowfeather's eyes widened. "Rain, Cloud, it's you! I'm Snowfeather, your aunt."

Rainwhisker tilted his head. "Ice only had a brother," he complained.

Snowfeather tilted her head. "No, Ice and Tooth had a sister, me," she said. "Rainwhisker, you have a brother named Fire and a sister named Night, correct?"

Rainwhisker nodded. "I remember when Night was killed in battle, and Ice killed an innocent apprentice."

Snowfeather looked down, knowing the apprentice was Oceanpaw. "Cloudfoot, you have a brother named Fang, don't you?"

Cloudfoot nodded. "If you are my brother's sister and Ice's sister, how do you know all of this? How come you weren't in MoonClan?"

"I stumbled into Ice awhile ago. I'm sorry to tell you, but Tooth has passed," Snowfeather told Cloudfoot.

"Wouldn't surprise me," Cloudfoot sighed.

"I grew up with my siblings, but as a young kit, I was exiled and thrown into the forest. I was thought to be dead until Ice found me a little while ago," Snowfeather explained.

The two seemend fascinated to find a family member, and they chatted a little with Snowfeather until moving on.

Getting to the apprentice den, Snowfeather found only a few apprentices. Some were out training, the only ones remaining being calico she-cat, a black tom, and a brown tabby tom.

"Hi," the she-cat purred. "I'm Rosepaw, and this is Nightpaw," she said, pointing to the black tom.

"I'm Treepaw," the brown tabby tom explained. "Rosepaw and Nightpare are siblings. There's also Violetpaw and Lavenderpaw, a bunch of kittypets who decided to be warriors. They're out training."

Snowfeather nodded, moving onto the nursery. There were really only a few queens in the nursery, the only one with kits being a gray tabby she-cat.

"I'm Cloverpelt," she said. She pointed to three kits. "This is Chesnutkit, Redkit, and Willowkit," she explained.

Snowfeather examined the kits. The light brown tabby tom was Chesnutkit. The ginger tom had to be Redkit. The she-cat, Willowkit, looked the most like her mother with her light gray tabby pelt.

"What lovely kits," Snowfeather purred. She remembered being in the forest, wanting kits of her own. For some reason, she turned to Lionstripe, wondering if they would ever have kits someday.

"Their father would be proud. He died bravely in battle," Cloverpelt sighed.

"Oh, I'm terrible sorry," Lionstripe told her.

"Don't be. His name was Chesnuttail, which is why one of my kits is named after him. I'm still confused to where his loyalties lie though. I guess you two should be let in on the FoxClan secret."

"FoxClan secret?" Snowfeather asked.

Cloverpelt nodded. "Chesnuttail was really a MoonClan cat, Moonstar's son. He escaped with his sister, Hazelnose, who later ended up being evil. He really liked Hollyfur, the she-cat I assume you've met. He became mates with me though, choosing me over her. Unfortunately, Hollyfur found out she was pregnant with his kits after he died. She gave birth to Rosepaw and Nightpaw, and I pretended they were my kits. Unfortunately, I realized I was pregnant, and the kits found out the truth. They're half-siblings," she explained.

"Oh my," Snowfeather spoke. Not wanting to hear anymore, they left. Snowfeather stopped at the medicine den, peeking her head in.

"Everything alright, Snowfeather?" Mistyfall asked.

"I was just wondering if you needed to check my wounds again," Snowfeather asked.

"Maybe later. Explore for right now. Come back tonight again though."

Snowfeather nodded, heading away with Lionstripe to explore FoxClan together.

Chapter 39

It had been a moon or so since Snowfeather and Lionstripe's arrival to FoxClan. All the cats has been so kind and caring, and the two had become accustomed to life there. Snowfeather's wounds had nearly healed by now, only a faint scar remaining.

Snowfeather still did not have the chance to go to SnowClan and see if Wavekit- thought she probably had a warrior name by now- was there. She wanted to know more about Oceanpaw's death as well.

She could tell Lionstripe could tell this too as she glanced at the SnowClan border while hunting and during patrols.

Snowfeather had hope though now that it was nearly a full moon. The gathering would be taking place shortly, and she hoped Sunstar would allow her to go.

As for other news, Cloverpelt's kits had become apprentices, and Snowfeather had gotten to hear more stories of her family in MoonClan from Rainwhisker and Cloudfoot, the only kin she was able to stand, besides her mother, of course.

Lionstripe had helped Snowfeather feel more welcome in FoxClan. The two had been hunting and growing in their love ever since they had to arrive. Snowfeather was just glad she had finally found the tom she would stay with forever.

Snowfeather awoke in the morning, her eyes droopy from an early morning rise. The two had been going on morning patrol, hoping to somehow feel like they were back in MoonClan, though it just resulted in eternal sleepiness.

She poked Lionstripe until he woke up. He let out a large yawn and stretched, padding outside with Snowfeather. The two padded across the snowy camp to the small fresh-kill pile. Since there were few cats in FoxClan, most cats were well-fed.

The two shared a mouse before heading off with the other cats on morning patrol. Sunstar led it instead of Embertail, a change for once. Padding by the SnowClan border, Snowfeather turned her head in curiosity, though no cats were visible.

Snowfeather left Lionstripe for a minute, padding up to Sunstar. "Sunstar?" she asked.

The ginger she-cat lifted her head. "What is it, Snowfeather?"

"Well, as you know, tonight is the gathering. I was curious to know if perhaps I could come along. There are some SnowClan cats I have not seen in awhile, and I was hoping to speak to them," Snowfeather told her.

Sunstar tilted her head. "I suppose I could make some adjustments. I'm afraid I can't allow Lionstripe to come though. The numbers will be too big then."

"I'm sure he'll be fine," Snowfeather said, turning her head to see him walking with the other cats.

"Alright then," Sunstar said. "It's best not to tell every cat you're going when the ones coming have not even been announced yet."

"I promise, I won't," Snowfeather told her. She fell back, waiting for Lionstripe to catch up with her.

"What was that all about?" Lionstripe asked.

"Just talking to Sunstar," Snowfeather replied. She waited for Lionstripe to say something back, but he didn't, only continuing to walk alongside her.

A very light snow began to fell as they continued their patrol. The CloudClan border and SnowClan border were both fine, and FoxClan had no reason to remark borders.

The snow had stopped falling by the time they had returned, and cats stood anxiously as they awaited Sunstar to announce the cats attending the gathering. Snowfeather shook with excitement as she waited.

After a long and agonizing wait, Sunstar padded up on the rock, yowling for FoxClan's attention. The cats became silent as she began to speak.

"The full moon is tonight indicating that the gathering will be taking place tonight among the clans. It is as this time that I must announce those who will be attending," Sunstar spoke. "Embertail, Cloudfoot, Cloverpelt, Snowfeather, Violetpaw, Lavenderpaw, Chesnutpaw, Willowpaw, and Treepaw will be attending," Sunstar announced,

Cats let out sighs as they found out they weren't chosen, though some, like Snowfeather, cried cheers. She turned to Lionstripe, unexpectedly finding a smile on his face. "Have fun and say safe," he told her.

"Don't worry, I will," Snowfeather said, licking his cheek.

She padded into the warriors den to rest. She had to sleep most of the afternoon in order to stay awake during the evening and night. She closed her eyes, feeling Lionstripe's tail curl around her.

Her eyes then slowly drooped, allowing her to fall in a peaceful rest.

Snowfeather awoke to find that Lionstripe had gone, probably hunting. Cats had gathered as they prepared to leave for the gathering. Snowfeather rushed out of the den, hoping to see Lionstripe, but she found him gone.

"Alright, let's go!" Sunstar instructed. Together, Snowfeather walked with the group of cats, staying near Cloudfoot's side. She didn't know the others too well.

"Have to been to the gathering before?" Snowfeather asked.

Cloudfoot nodded. "Yes, I have. It's not much excitement, just for the apprentices, I guess. I guess it'll be exciting for you since it's your first time."

Snowfeather nodded. "I'm actually hoping to see someone at the gathering."

"Who?" Cloudfoot asked.

"An old friend," Snowfeather replied. She turned her head, looking at the snow that lay on the trees. The stars shined up ahead, a full moon providing light in the forest below.

Snowfeather began to smell the scents of other cats, she gasped as they came into a clearing. It seems FoxClan was the last to arrive, and CloudClan and SnowClan had already arrived.

Snowfeather looked up, seeing a striped and spotted tom, probably the leaders of the two clans.

With still some time to talk, Snowfeather rushed towards the SnowClan side, gazing around for a gray she-cat with green eyes. Cats looked at her oddly as she went by, not that it mattered though.

"Snowfeather, come back! The gathering is about to start!" Embertail hissed.

Snowfeather nodded, turning around. She headed back to the FoxClan side, sighing. It seemed she would never find Wavekit.

"Welcome, FoxClan," the spotted tom said. "Shall I begin?" he asked. Snowfeather watched as Sunstar and the other cat nodded.

"That's Smokestar, SnowClan's leader," Cloudfoot told her.

"SnowClan has been prospering well during leaf-bare. We unfortunately announce that one of or clanmates, Skycloud, and her kit have disappeared, probably dying in the fire that took place this past leaf-fall. If any of you have seen them, please let us know. In other words, we have two new apprentices, Dawnpaw and Mousepaw."

Snowfeather watched as a gray she-cat and a spotted she-cat who looked similar to Smokestar stood up. Crowds cheered for them. Snowfeather still thought the whole situation with Skycloud sounded familiar. She stiffened. Was that the she-cat Tooth had died with? Were these cats the ones who got him to change his heart?

"Thank you, Smokestar," the striped tom said.

"Stripestar, CloudClan's leader," Cloudfoot whispered.

"CloudClan continues to do well as we welcome some new kits into the nursery. Other than that, we've been doing fine," Stripestar told the clans.

"Very good, Stripestar. FoxClan has also been doing well as we continue to recover from the battle. We welcome two new warriors, only one being able to make it tonight, Snowfeather and Lionstripe."

She felt Cloudfoot nudge her, and she stood up. The cheering of the cats made her shiver in excitement. She sat back down, only for the gathering to fall apart moments later. As cats made their way out, some still chatted, and she headed to the SnowClan side.

Immediately, she noticed a familiar gray pelt and evil green eyes. "WAVEKIT!" she yowled. "WAVEKIT!"

The she-cat turned her head. "Do I know you?" she asked.

"What, you don't remember me? It's me, Snowkit. Well, I'm Snowfeather now..."

Wavekit stiffened. "Oh, yes, I remember you. I'm Wavestorm now, by the way."

"Well, I guess you and Oceanpaw got to SnowClan alright," Snowfeather told her.

"Snowfeather, Oceanpaw is--"

"Dead, I know," Snowfeather replied. "She died in battle, killed by my sister."

"What happened to you after you left? Where did you go? How did you end up here?" Wavestorm asked.

"I saw to put those death berries in the prey. You heard me, so I ran off into a different forest. I lived in another clan for awhile, and when it ended, I came here with my mate," Snowfeather said.

"Oh, that," Wavestorm said. "Is your mate Lionstripe?"

Snowfeather nodded. "That's him."

"We'll, hopefully he'll make a great father, better than my ex-mate," Wavestorm mumbled.

"What are you talking about?" Snowfeather asked, unsure of her weird comment.

"Um, Snowfeather, you don't realize you're pregnant, do you?" Wavestorm asked, staring at her stomach. "Just thought you gained a little weight?"

"I, uh," Snowfeather looked down at her stomach, seeing it had grown a bit more than usual. How did she not notice?

"Who is your ex-mate?" Snowfeather asked.

"Oh, haven't heard about that yet? It's Smokestar. I have three kits of my own who are apprentices. He left me for another she-cat, and she had two kits. You just saw the, tonight as he announced they were apprentices," Wavestorm said. Hearing her name, she turned. "I've got to go, Snowfeather. Good luck with the kits."

Snowfeather felt sickness come over her. She stared at her stomach again. "Help me, StarClan, I'm expecting kits," she whispered.

Chapter 40

Snowfeather headed back from the gathering in silence, not sure what to say or what to do. She was expecting kits! She wasn't sure if she should be excited or worried. How could she care for them? What would Lionstripe say?

"I've got to tell Mistyfall," she whispered.

The full moon still shined overhead as cats made their way through the snowy forest back to camp. Snowfeather lagged behind Cloudfoot, the thought of her unborn kits still running through her head.

What if Wavestorm was just lying? She never did like Snowfeather. Maybe that was it. It would be a good idea to check with Mistyfall first though.

Coming back into camp, Snowfeather rushed to the medicine cat den first before greeting Lionstripe. Seeing no cat inside the den except Mistyfall, Snowfeather padded in.

"Mistyfall," she spoke.

The older gray she-cat turned her head. "Is everything alright, Snowfeather?"

Snowfeather looked at her paws and shuffled them awkwardly. "Um, I think I might be expecting kits. Could you tell me if it's true or not?" Snowfeather asked.

Mistyfall eyed Snowfeather's stomach, lightly touching it with her tail. "You are," Mistyfall told her. "Your stomach is a bit bigger than before. I'm surprised I didn't notice it earlier. Congratulations. Have you told any other cats?"

Snowfeather shook her head. "I think I'll tell Lionstripe tomorrow. Please promise you won't tell any cat, Mistyfall?"

Mistyfall nodded. "I promise."

"When will they be due?" Snowfeather asked.

"A moon or so. By the next gathering, you should be ready to give birth or close to giving birth," Mistyfall told her.

Snowfeather padded out of the den, running into Lionstripe moments later. His eyes widened.

"Snowfeather, where did you go?!"

"Oh, well, I got a thorn stuck in my pad on the way here, so I was just getting it pulled out by Mistyfall," Snowfeather explained, hoping he would buy her story.

"Oh," he replied. "Are you alright now?"

Snowfeather nodded. "Fine. Can we go to sleep now?" she asked.

Lionstripe nodded, escorting her to the warriors den to rest. She rested her head next to Lionstripe's listening to his soft breathing as he fell asleep.

Snowfeather couldn't sleep though. She kept thinking of what she would tell him, how she would tell him she was expecting his kits.

She got up, padding out of the den. She stood outside, staring at the stars up above. She wondered if her mother was looking down on her now as she stared at them.

"If you can hear me, Mother," she whispered, "Please give me the strength and hope to tell Lionstripe. Allow me to be a good mother like you, and him, a good father."

Beginning to get tired, she padded back inside, resting down next to Lionstripe again. She let out a loud yawn then closed her eyes, falling asleep.

Snowfeather opened her eyes, realizing she was no longer in the warriors den. She was in StarClan, no doubt. She stood in a forest, a large cave standing ahead.

Snowfeather turned, hoping to spot a cat, but she spotted no one.

"Hello?" she called, padding through the forest. She didn't dare enter the cave, only peeking her head through. She then turned, continuing through the forest as she looked for some cat.

Hearing a noise, she turned, seeing a glowing white figure. Her mother! Her mother gracefully walked towards the cave, and Snowfeather called after her.

"Mother!" she shouted.

Her mother did not turn her head but instead began walking to the cave. Seeing a light, Snowfeather realized the cave had begun to light up now. Following her mother inside, Snowfeather recognized the figures of several other StarClan cats.

Where was she? What did this dream even mean?

She walked up to the shining light, feeling energy move

through her as she moved towards it. Suddenly, she became full of power, feeling electricity run through her paws. Her eyes suddenly turned a bright blue that shined through the light of the cave and all those of the StarClan cats. She suddenly felt herself growing weak, and she fainted on the cave floor.

Snowfeather opened her eyes back in the den, feeling weak and tired. Her whole body was cold, and she felt a force pulling at her, almost like it wanted her to leave. She tried to pull back, though each time she did, she felt weaker.

She realized she was in mist form, and every time she attempted to turn back into a cat, she failed, growing colder and weaker, the force growing stronger.

"Lionstripe," she whispered.

She watched as the tom slowly opened his green eyes. "Snowfeather? You're in mist form."

"I know," she told him. "Look, something's not right. I can't change back into a cat," she said, the force pulling at her once more. She began to float away from the warriors den, Lionstripe following her. "I don't know where I'm going. I'll come back, I promise," she said, letting the force take her.

She heard Lionstripe cry out, only for her to plunge into darkness.

Chapter 41

As Snowfeather opened her eyes, her vision was blurred. She felt weak, and her throat was parched and sore. Her vision began to clear some, and she looked down, noticing two familiar white paws. She was no longer in mist form. She was a cat again! The only question was where was she?

She noticed she was in a dark den. It was old, the sides looking as if they were about to collapse. She laid under new soft moss, while old moss sat in the corners of the den, frail and easily breakable.

She slowly stood up, attempting to balance on all four of her legs. Wobbling over to the corner, she stuck her paw in the moss, the substance crumbling at her paws. A spiderweb hung above her, and she stuck a paw in it, shoving it away.

She peered her head out of the den, seeing cats march by, all silent. She knew she was no longer in FoxClan, but another clan. A gray tabby tom with amber eyes hissed at the cats, telling them to march forward. She watched as he turned his gaze, his amber eyes piercing hers.

Snowfeather ducked away, rushing back to the nest. Only moments later, the tom padded in the den. He gave a smile, one that Snowfeather wasn't sure was positive or negative. Either way, she did not trust the tom.

"You're awake," the tom purred.

"What is this place? Where am I? Who are you?!" Snowfeather spat.

The tom laughed. "As if you don't know. Honestly, Snowstar, I would've thought StarClan had told you by now."

Snowfeather tensed. Had the tom just called her Snowstar? She bit her lip, then spoke again. "I am not Snowstar, and no, I don't know where I am. If you don't mind, I'd like to return back to my clan," she said, gazing at her stomach as she thought of the kits growing inside her.

"Don't be silly, Snowstar!" the tom exclaimed again.

"My name isn't Snowstar!" Snowfeather spat. "It's Snow*feather*!"

The tom rolled his eyes. "It's a good thing I hired extra cats to guard your den. You are our leader, Snowstar. You are the cat we've all been waiting for!"

"I don't know what you're talking about," Snowfeather complained.

"My name is Rabbitfur, your loyal deputy," he said, dipping his head. "We are WeedClan, an ancient clan thought to have died out long ago. We were dying, Snowstar, and we began to think we would never survive. That is until we remembered the prophecy brought my our ancestors."

"Prophecy?" Snowfeather asked.

Rabbitfur nodded. "It's been passed over generations. It claims that once darkness falls upon WeedClan, which it has, only a cat pure as snow with mystical powers will be able to bring us back. We WeedClan cats have powers too, and once we heard your name was Snowfeather, we pulled you from your other clan to here. You are now our leader."

Snowfeather stiffened. "I am no leader. You have the wrong cat, Rabbitfur. All I am able to do is transform into mist. If you excuse me, I'd like to leave the clan now," she said, taking a step forward.

She stopped as Rabbitfur moved in front of her. "You're not going anywhere," he spat. "Your name is Snowstar, our new leader. Perhaps you did not hear from StarClan, but we did. You will lead this clan."

"Don't you understand?!" Snowfeather spat. "I am not your leader! I've never even heard of this clan! StarClan would've come to me, you filfthy piece of fox dung! Let me through!"

"No," Rabbitfur growled, stepping closer to her. Snowfeather noticed how much taller he was than her, and she sunk down.

"Why are you not leader? Who assigned you deputy?" she spat.

"I am not the cat of the prophecy, Snowstar. Only you are. StarClan has called upon me as deputy. I can feel it in my veins," Rabbitfur told her.

"You're insane," Snowfeather hissed. "If I am to be leader, I must receive nine lives, yes? Maybe then I can prove to you that I'm *not* your leader."

"No, WeedClan is full of cats with powers, therefore the leader's powers make up for their nine lives," Rabbitfur explained.

"This is ridiculous," Snowfeather complained. She thought of Lionstripe probably worrying sick about her right now. All she wanted to do was return home. "Please, let me go! I'll help you find the real leader," she begged.

"No, you are the leader, and you will never return home," he spat.

"Watch me," Snowfeather replied. As she attempted to turn into mist, she felt her body collapse, and she felt weak. She couldn't transform in this condition.

"Don't even bother trying," Rabbitfur began. "We knew what you might try. One of our cats put a magical border in WeedClan. We have some smart cats in this clan, Snowstar. They're all gifted from StarClan. They've learned how to disable your powers here."

Snowfeather felt anger surge through her. "Why, you little —" Before she finished, she sprang at Rabbitfur. He knocked her down, and she suddenly felt a zap of electricity go through her.

"I have powers too, you know," he whispered. She looked at his paws, seeing them spark with electricity.

Snowfeather attempted to get up, only to be zapped again. She fell to the ground, exhausted.

"Don't mess with me, Snowfeather. I have great powers," he growled. With those words, he exited the den, leaving her in the dark, weak.

Once she was able to get to her feet, she poked her head out, seeing two large guards near her den. "Water," she begged them.

One of the guards turned to a young she-cat nearby. "She requests water! Go get some!" he snapped.

The she-cat nodded and ran off. Soon enough, Snowfeather's throat was no longer parched, and she nibbled on a squirrel brought to her. Outside, snow fell silently, and she groaned, wanting to go home to FoxClan.

"We'll be home soon," she whispered to her kits. "We'll be with Daddy in FoxClan..."

"SNOWSTAR!" Rabbitfur snapped, interrupting her. "Stand up!"

She did so, only to receive a slap in the face with his paw. "What was that for?!" she asked.

"You weren't fast enough!" he spat.

"I'm your leader," Snowfeather growled. "It would be nice if

you could treat me with a little respect!"

Rabbitfur glared at her. "I am your deputy, and you do not know anything of WeedClan. It is best you listen to me for these next few days, leader. The clan excitedly awaits you. Follow my lead, and you'll be fine..."

Snowfeather eyed him again, though she followed him. Guards padded by her side, and she nervously padded up a large log with Rabbitfur. Once cats got a glimpse of her, they cheered, chanting, "SNOWSTAR! SNOWSTAR!"

"Cats of WeedClan!" Rabbitfur yowled. "I bring you your leader!" He turned to Snowfeather, whispering, "Make them like you."

"I don't even want to be here," she whispered back.

"Do as I say," he commanded.

Snowfeather gulped, looking over the groups of cats who awaited her to speak. She knew in order to leave, they had to like her and trust her. With all the might she had, she boomed, "Long live, WeedClan!"

Cats cheered, smiling at their leader. She felt herself smile a little too, remembering she had to escape, she had to go home.

"I am Snowstar, your leader," she said. Cats bowed to her, and she shuddered. It all felt wrong. This wasn't what normal clan cats did. No, WeedClan was something different.

"It is a miracle that," she gulped, "Rabbitfur was able to find me. Please everyone, applaud your future leader."

She took in a breath of relief as the others cheered for Rabbitfur who gave a large smile to all the cats. She knew the evil he possessed though, and she tried to ignore it.

"There are many things I'd like to say, however, it would take too long to say it," she began. She felt Rabbitfur's gaze on her, and she gulped again. "StarClan has sent me here, and now, I will fulfill your prophecy and promises. WeedClan will never fall again!"

Cats cheered and yowled, and Rabbitfur slowly led her back to the den. "Good job," he whispered. "I'm beginning to like you. It seems you've warmed up to us after all, Snowstar. Perhaps my powers will be contained for now."

Snowfeather weakly smiled. *They must trust you,* she remembered. "Yes, Rabbitfur. Maybe you're right. Maybe I'm mistaken. I'm beginning to like this idea after all."

Rabbitfur purred. "Perfect. Share a squirrel with me, then.

We'll discuss more matters."

Snowfeather nodded, following him to the fresh-kill pile. He scooted cats out of the way as Snowfeather came through. She couldn't help but feel guilty as he did so.

She sat with him as they shared a mouse. It felt odd. She didn't like pretending that she was fond of Rabbitfur. She wanted to share a squirrel with Lionstripe, go hunting with him. That would have to wait though...

"Now, you are expected to be a ruler of WeedClan, not an ordinary leader. I'm sure you've noticed that already," Rabbitfur told her.

"I have," Snowfeather nodded.

"Get used to it. Act like they are your loyal subjects, whether you like it or not. Once we've gained your trust, we may allow you to use your powers at times. You will lead one patrol each week, starting tomorrow. You will *always* share a meal with me," Rabbitfur told her.

Snowfeather wanted to argue at every rule, though she nodded, remembering he had to trust her.

"Now, it is time for you to rest," he said. Snowfeather looked up, seeing that now the clouds had cleared, an orange blanket had begun to cover the sky.

He led her back to her den where she curled up in her nest. He said good night, leaving her to rest. As she curled up, she shivered, thinking of how Lionstripe would keep her warm. She longed for that now, wanting him to curl up beside her.

She felt a tear slip down her nest, followed by others. She wept silently, not wanting the guards to see her. She had to be strong for her unborn kits though, and she closed her eyes, slowly falling asleep, hoping this would all fade away.

Chapter 42

Snowfeather was awoken in the morning by the yowl of Rabbitfur. His voice boomed through the camp. "WeedClan, awake!"

Snowfeather slowly opened her eyes, lifting herself to her feet. Before she could move, Rabbitfur burst into her den. "Awake, Snowstar! Your clan awaits for you to lead them on patrol."

"Do you always wake up so early?" she asked.

Rabbitfur nodded. "Yes, Snowstar. Now go, you must start your patrol!"

"I don't even know where I'm going," Snowfeather argued as Rabbitfur pushed her out of the den. Immediately, the same warriors stood by her side like guards, protecting her. Snowfeather stood tall and proud as she walked towards the rock, remembering that she had to get the cats to trust her in order to escape.

She slowly padded onto the familiar log, looking at the clanmates who cheered as they gazed at her.

"Cats of WeedClan," she purred. Cats began to silence their cries, and Snowfeather felt Rabbitfur stand beside her. "It is my honor to lead my very first patrol as leader of WeedClan!"

Cats erupted in cheer, silenced as Rabbitfur began to read off the names of cats who were lucky to patrol with their leader. Once he had finished, the guards stood by Snowfeather's side again as she walked down the log, beginning to pad into the forest.

Rabbitfur walked beside her as she began to lead the cats. "Now, we usually patrol along the tree line," he said, pointing to the thick brush of trees. "We then head by the river and the meadow, making a complete circle. I'll guide you this first time, only this first time. You must remember from then on."

Snowfeather nodded. "Of course," she said.

She padded with Rabbitfur through the forest, the guards still at Snowfeather's side. She knew Rabbitfur was only taking precautionary measures in case she did try to escape, which she would if she had the chance. She had to gain his trust, that was all. Most of all, she had to gain his trust and escape before her kits were born. What would Rabbitfur do to them if they were born while she was still in WeedClan?

She continued through the forest, realizing how dark it was. It was nothing like the beautiful MoonClan forest or the forest she had trained in with Stonecloud and Silverwhisker. This was much worse.

Burnt trees lined the forest, ashes covering the floor. Crows cried up ahead, flying through the woods.

"This forest is a bit, um, different," Snowfeather told Rabbitfur.

"It is all right, Snowstar. You may say that it is a failing forest. But you will bring the water and plants back," Rabbitfur assured her.

"Of course," Snowfeather told him, continuing on her way. She turned the corner with Rabbitfur, walking over some more ashes. She coughed as some flew in her face, and the guards immediately stopped.

"Snowstar, are you alright?" one of them asked.

Snowfeather nodded. "Fine, just inhaled some ash. Continue on the way," she instructed.

She continued through the woods, still gazing at the dying forest. What had happened before that had caused it to fail like this?

"We're nearing the river," Rabbitfur told her.

Snowfeather nodded, waiting to hear the trickling water.

She could not hear a sound though as they padded through bushes. They came to the snowy riverside, and Snowfeather peered over, seeing the river. It was nearly a quarter full, not nearly frozen over yet. The water was brown and dirty, most likely from the ash and other chemicals.

"This is your water source?" she asked.

Rabbitfur nodded. "Yes, Snowstar. The snowmelt will allow it to be clean once more."

"WeedClan will die if they drink this polluted water. Are there any other sources nearby?"

Rabbitfur shook his head. "Sadly, no. Do not worry, Snowstar. Leaf-bare is halfway through. We'll survive."

Snowfeather did not like the idea of drinking the polluted water, but she decided she had to agree with Rabbitfur.

They continued on their way, coming to the meadow now, she supposed. When the trees did clear, Snowfeather noticed the snow covered meadow. Nothing in it moved. Only dead trees and branches covered the ground near it.

"Is this a good hunting spot?" she asked.

"At times," Rabbitfur told her.

"How is it you're able to strive without a good water source and little food," Snowfeather asked.

"Why, Snowstar, don't you remember about the powers our clan possesses? Miststorm," Rabbitfur snapped to a small gray she-cat. "Come here and demonstrate your water powers to Snowstar."

"Of course, Rabbitfur," the she-cat spoke, bowing her head. She came forward, beginning to concentrate. Snowfeather watched as she shut her eyes tighter and tighter, only for nothing to happen.

"You fool!" Rabbitfur snapped, zapping the she-cat. Miststorm fell over in pain.

"What was that for?" Snowfeather asked.

"She was not quick enough, Snowstar," Rabbitfur explained.

Snowfeather went over to Miststorm's side, helping the she-cat up. "Perhaps you did not give her enough time, Rabbitfur. Let her do what is to be done for however long it takes."

"May I remind you that you are not an expert of this clan yet?" Rabbitfur asked, standing over her.

"I may not be an expert, but I am your leader and your only hope, so it is best if you listen to me," she spat.

She watched as Rabbitfur stood aside, letting Miststorm try again. Snowfeather watched as the she-cat concentrated once more. Suddenly, water began to rise from the ground, swirling around the she-cat. Slowly it fell like raindrops from the sky. Cats opened their mouths, letting the water fall in.

"Is this how you drink when the water is polluted?" Snowfeather asked Rabbitfur.

Rabbitfur nodded. "We have a few cats gifted like this. Some can detect prey, some are skilled fighters. We're all gifted, Snowstar."

"I see," Snowfeather said. "Is this all then?"

Rabbitfur nodded. "Yes, Snowstar. Come, WeedClan, let's make our descent back!" Rabbitfur snapped.

Snowfeather followed Rabbitfur back to the camp where she was escorted back to her den. A rabbit was left at her den which she ate quickly. She drank the water from the moss provided then sat in her den, wondering if she would be able to escape out of the den by digging a hole.

Before she could even attempt, Rabbitfur padded into her den. "Snowstar," he spoke, bowing. "I have come to check on you."

"I am fine, Rabbitfur," Snowfeather assured him.

"I have also come to ask if your stay has been well so far at WeedClan," Rabbitfur said.

Snowfeather stiffened, knowing her experience was terrible. "It is perfect, Rabbitfur. I never want to return home. WeedClan is my home now."

She watched Rabbitfur smile. "What a good she-cat," he purred. "I would like you to know we will only hold you captive like this for a little while longer. You are proving to be an excellent leader."

"Why, thank you, Rabbitfur. Do what you must for the clan," she told him. "I must ask, how did the clan get like this?"

"Ah, you have not heard the tale," Rabbitfur told her. "Sit down beside me, Snowstar. I will tell you."

Snowfeather nodded, sitting beside the tom. "Many ages ago when the first clan threatened to attack WeedClan, our StarClan ancestors came to us, telling us the prophecy that has just recently been fulfilled. No cat knew what it meant. Then the wars began. As a promise, StarClan gifted all cats with powers to protect themselves from these wars. For years these wars take place, for years the forest faltered. When I was only a kit, a clan set the entire forest on fire in attempt to wipe out the entire WeedClan population. They failed, only leaving a dying forest instead. We continue to strive."

"I see," Snowfeather spoke. "What other powers do cats possess?"

"Too many to describe, Snowstar," Rabbitfur told her, standing up.

"Rabbitfur," Snowfeather said.

He turned, gazing at her. "What is it, Snowstar?"

"I noticed you told me there was a magical border put on this camp so I could not use my powers. How are you able to?" Snowfeather asked.

"Simple. The spell was only to contain your powers, not every cat's powers. Is that all, Snowstar?"

"One last thing," Snowfeather told him. "I am thrilled to be serving WeedClan, and I'd give my life for this clan," she spoke, hoping he'd believe her.

Rabbitfur smiled. "As would I, Snowstar. As would I."

With those words, he left. Snowfeather turned to the back of her den in anger, scratching her claws down the rough rocks of the den. Oh, how she wanted to get out of here. She wanted to go home to FoxClan, to Lionstripe, to Cloudfoot and Rainwhisker. But no, she was stuck here.

"StarClan, why aren't you here?" she whispered. She fell to the floor, tears silently falling. "Please help me," she begged. "Help me, my kits. Comfort Lionstripe. Please," she whispered.

With those words, she drifted off to sleep.

Chapter 43

It had been exactly seven sunrises since Snowfeather had taken on the role of WeedClan leader. It had been seven sunrises since she had been dragged away from her home and had been held captive. As each day passed, another claw mark was added to the wall of the den. She knew her kits would be born at the end of the moon, and she only had so much time left.

She awoke bright and early, fog rolling in over the forest. The magical border and large amount of guards still stood by her side. She wondered if Rabbitfur would ever gain her trust and get rid of it.

She stretched and yawned, looking at her stomach. It was certainly getting bigger. How had Rabbitfur not noticed? Perhaps he already knew...Snowfeather shook the thought away, waiting at the entrance of the den for Rabbitfur to come get her like he did every morning.

Moments later, the tom arrived, a smile on his face. "Snowstar, good morning!"

"A good morning indeed," Snowfeather agreed. "I see it might snow today."

"Nothing big," Rabbitfur told her. "Come on, let us go share a meal."

Snowfeather nodded, following him out of the den. Rabbitfur issued something to the guards she couldn't quite catch, and then suddenly two guards moved away. It seemed he was slowly taking away the guarding.

"May I ask what that was for?" Snowfeather asked.

"I don't believe you need eight guards surrounding you

anymore," Rabbitfur told her. "Six will do."

"I see," Snowfeather said, sitting down next to him at the fresh-kill pile. Immediately, a cat came to her with a large robin. She was amazed how they could find this good of prey in the middle of leaf-bare.

She bit into the robin, smiling at Rabbitfur. Her smile was fake, and her eyes seemed to stare deep inside him, as if she were wondering what his plan was.

"You are leading patrol today, correct?" she asked.

Rabbitfur nodded. "Yes, I will. Tomorrow you will lead patrol. Let me tell you this, Snowstar, the cats love you. You're the best leader we've had."

"Why, thank you, I'm flattered," Snowfeather told him. She wanted to gag on her own words. All she wanted to do was escape this prison.

"Have you finished your robin?" he asked.

Snowfeather nodded. "Oh yes, it was delicious, Rabbitfur. Please give my gratitude to whichever cat caught this."

"I will, Snowstar," Rabbitfur said, standing up. Snowfeather stood up beside him. He towered over her, and she remembered back how he had zapped her in the den only so little ago. Would he do that now?

"I must be off. Guards, let her stay outside her den today," Rabbitfur told them.

The guards nodded, and Snowfeather waved good-bye to Rabbitfur. They stopped near her den, allowing her to stay outside. She licked her paws and tail. Her fur had been terribly dirty ever since she arrived.

The snow felt soft under her, and she scooped some up with her paw, remembering back to the woods in leaf-bare with Stonecloud and Silverwhisker. She wished she was there in her little

log now.

She stretched, looking at her stomach. Was it possible any cat noticed she was pregnant? Did Lionstripe know?

The thought of her mate made her want to cry. He probably was doleful back in FoxClan, wishing her to return home.

"I will return home. Don't worry," she whispered, hoping maybe Lionstripe would hear her.

"Is everything all right, Snowstar?" one of the guards asked.

"Oh, yes, just fine," Snowfeather told him. "Tell me, how long has WeedClan been here?"

"Too many moons to count, Snowstar," a large ginger tom replied.

"I see. How does one come to WeedClan?" she asked.

"Stumbling into WeedClan's borders is very rare, Snowstar. Usually only a cat of magic can find it, like yourself. We are far concealed in," a gray tom said.

"How is it you have faced many threats?" Snowfeather asked.

"Cats with other powers have found us. They created powers, trying to bring us down and claim this land for themselves," the same ginger tom said.

"How terrible," Snowfeather told them. "Were they killed off?"

"Some were killed off, some left," a white tom with a large scar running down his eye said.

"How is it they were able to leave? This forest must be hard to get out of it is hard to get into," Snowfeather said.

"They are clever cats, Snowstar. Usually magical powers

allow them to leave. Some rely on StarClan's power. It is a long journey. There have been tales of a magical whirlpool that transports you back to where you wish to go," the gray tom said.

"How fascinating. I simply love WeedClan's culture. This whirlpool, where is it located? For story telling, of course," Snowfeather asked.

"No cat knows," the ginger tom said. "It is only a kit's tale spoken by nursery queens. It was said that only StarClan's light could lead the cat to the place. Only those who believed in StarClan and practiced their teachings could find it."

"Well, it would be wonderful if it were real. WeedClan is so wonderful and fascinating. I am thrilled to be your leader," Snowfeather told them.

"We are thrilled to serve you," a brown tabby tom said, bowing to the leader. The guards bowed one by one before standing up again.

"I am ready to go back inside," Snowfeather told them.

"Are you sure you do not want to stay out here in the lovely weather, Snowfeather?" a guard asked.

"I'm a bit tired, if you don't mind. A nap will do me well. I'll be back outside once I have woken," Snowfeather told him.

"Very well," the white tom with the scar said.

She was led back inside where she curled up in her nest. Once the guards stood outside, she moved to the back of the den, remembering the words. *Only those who believed in StarClan and practiced their teachings could find it...*

The whirlpool had to be real. It had to lead her home. It was no wonder it could not be found. These cats did not practice StarClan's teachings at all, they only believed they did. Once all these guards were removed, into the forest she would go. She would go home.

The thought of returning filled hope through her. She would have her kits safely in FoxClan, she would be back with Lionstripe. Everything would be perfect...

She curled up in her nest, wondering if napping would actually do her some good. She didn't do much in WeedClan, and sleeping seemed to be the only thing she could do. She closed her eyes, drifting off.

Snowfeather opened her eyes, seeing the sky had darkened over. Tiny snowflakes fell from the sky in swirls. How long had she been asleep?

"Snowstar," the familiar voice of one of the guards rang through the camp.

"It seems I've woken from my nap," Snowfeather said, rising from her nest. "How long was I asleep?"

"Quite awhile. I was only checking if you were all right. I'm not so sure you would like to come outside in this snowfall now."

"No, I love the snow. I will come outside," she said, stepping outside. The snow lightly fell on her pelt, and she smiled, beginning to twirl around in the snow.

"Snowstar, are you all right?" the guard asked.

"Fine," she said, looking up at the twirling snow. She swore she could see her mother in it, her brother, her sister, her father, Lionstripe...This was a special snowfall, a snowfall from StarClan.

"Snowstar!" a familiar cry came.

She turned, seeing Rabbitfur marching towards her. "Come inside the den. There is a matter we need to discuss."

"Oh, yes, Rabbitfur," she said, following him back into her den. She longed to go back outside in the snow and smile like she did so shortly ago. She had to gain Rabbitfur's trust though.

"What is the matter, Rabbitfur?" Snowfeather asked. "Tell

me how your patrol went first."

"It went fine," Rabbitfur told her. "I noticed a few plants struggling to grow back. I'm sure once your powers kick in the forest will be alive."

"Yes, of course," Snowfeather said.

"The matter I wanted to discuss is an important one that has been on my mind ever since you arrived," Rabbitfur began, pacing around the den. "You must know that this decision must be respected, and I would not do the same with other cats."

"What is it, Rabbitfur?" Snowfeather asked.

"Snowstar, I have decided to take away the guards and the magical border," Rabbitfur told her.

Chapter 44

"Really?" Snowfeather asked, shock by his startling decision. "Thank you, Rabbitfur. I won't fail you, I promise," Snowfeather told him, though guilt filled her stomach. All these cats thought she loved WeedClan and that she was their faithful leader, and she would all be betraying them very shortly.

"Do not use your powers to a great extent," Rabbitfur warned her. "It should only be used on the revival of the clans. Remember, patrol tomorrow," he told her.

Snowfeather nodded. "Yes, I remember," she said. "May I make an announcement to the clan about this exciting moment."

"What a splendid idea," Rabbitfur said. "Follow me."

It felt odd walking alongside him without a million guards standing by her side. She could freely walk up onto the familiar log. Cats gazed at her and smiled, and she smiled back, a real smile. She was thrilled she would be able to escape.

"CATS OF WEEDCLAN!" she yowled. Cats looked at her, their eyes fixed on their leader. The entire sky could be falling, and they would not have noticed.

"I have thrilling news. As you may have noticed, no guards stood by me on my way up here. These precautionary measures were put up by Rabbitfur as he began to trust me. Now I can be trusted as your full leader! The magical borders are gone, the guards too, and now, I can use my powers and revive this clan!"

Cats cheered at this announcement, turning back to Snowfeather. One tom shouted out, "Do a demonstration!"

Snowfeather froze. "No, no, that is not necessary. My powers are only used for revival."

"Revive something here!" another cat shouted.

Snowfeather turned to Rabbitfur for help, but he only gazed at her, waiting for her to say something. She was leader now, and she no longer took advice from him.

"No," she hissed. Cats were taken aback by this. She stopped, knowing they had to like and trust her. "I mean, that won't be necessary. My powers will fail if I use them all right now, and I must use them to revive the clan. You'll see them a bit leader, by the end of the moon."

"Why such a long wait?" Rabbitfur asked.

"To keep them in suspense," she whispered.

"We've been in suspense for moons. Do not keep them waiting too long," he told her.

"This time next week I will have showed my powers. Don't worry, Rabbitfur. They'll see my powers then," she spoke. She turned, waving to the crowd once more. In less than seven sunrises, she needed to escape, or else she couldn't describe what WeedClan would do to her.

Snowfeather awoke to yet another cloudy day. Four sunrises had gone by, four sunrises she had kept the clan in suspense. She knew with only three sunrises left, she'd have to either escape, or tell the truth, and telling the truth was not an option.

She yawned and stretched, gazing at her stomach like she did every morning. Her stomach was growing a bit more, and she knew the clan would start getting suspicious soon. She had to hurry up and escape before her kits were born.

She padded outside, meeting Rabbitfur by the fresh-kill pile. He smiled, shoving a squirrel towards her. She began to gobble it up as she sat beside him.

"Good morning," he said.

"My, my manners are failing. Good morning to you,"

Snowfeather told him. "How is everything right now?"

"Good, good," Rabbitfur said. "When are you planning to use your powers?"

"Why do you ask?" Snowfeather asked him.

"I need to patrol all day long one of these days to make sure we're ready for your powers. I need to know when you'll use them so I can make sure everything is ready," Rabbitfur told her.

"All day?"

"It is a long process. I must patrol the *entire* forest," Rabbitfur said.

"Why not tomorrow?" Snowfeather asked. "I've kept them waiting long enough, and the forest must be revived!"

"Tomorrow it shall be. I will patrol today. Are you all right on your own today?" he asked.

"All right? I'm perfectly fine on my own," she purred.

"Well, then it is decreed, Snowstar. I'll patrol the entire border today. Do not let any cats on patrols. I don't want them causing more damage for what comes tomorrow," Rabbitfur smiled. "Off I go! Make sure to make an announcement to the clan."

"Why, certainly," Snowfeather purred. She watched as he padded into the woods, and then she rose, silently cheering. Today, she would escape. Today, she would be free.

She padded onto the log, and cats eyed her as she did so. They gathered without any call, all staring at Snowfeather with excitement.

"I'm sure you all know why I'm up here," she purred. With those words, cats began to cheer.

"Tomorrow I will be using my powers to revive this forest!" she declared. "Are you all ready?!"

Cats cheered and screamed. "Yes, Snowstar!" they screeched.

"Good," she purred. She headed off the log, padding over to some guards who guarded the camp. They eyed her as she came towards them.

"I beg your pardon, but I just wanted to let you know I'm meeting up with Rabbitfur in the woods to patrol. I'll be back soon," she assured them.

"Very well, Snowstar," the orange tom said, though he seemed suspicious.

"See ya!" she told him, running into the dead woods. She giggled and screeched happily. She was free!

Chapter 45

Snowfeather immediately climbed up the nearest tree, knowing it would be a good idea to scout out first to make sure Rabbitfur was not nearby. When she saw he was nowhere in sight, she went off, knowing she had to rely on StarClan to escape.

She padded down the tree, blending into the fluffy white snow. She moved quickly and swiftly through the dead woods. She looked around constantly, making sure no cat was nearby. She then continued moving, the snow beginning to fall lightly. At one point, she stopped near a tree, knowing she had to ask StarClan for help.

She closed her eyes, whispering, "Show me the whirlpool, StarClan. Lead me out of this horrid place," she prayed.

Hearing a twig snap, she froze. She crouched down near a bush, noticing Rabbitfur nearby. She gasped, holding in her breath. Rabbitfur went by, gazing around. He looked at the bush, the continued on. Snowfeather knew she would be better traveling by mist as she headed out of the dying woods.

Once he had faded into the distance, she transformed into mist, moving through the dead woods. *StarClan, Mother, please help me, help* us, she begged inside her head as she moved through the woods.

Snow fell quicker now, not that she minded. She had to blend in somehow. She continued moving until she saw thick woods again with glorious leaves and soft snowy grounds, not charred trees and ashes scattered everywhere,

She transformed back into a cat, beginning to pad through the woods. Suddenly, she saw a light gleam down. StarClan's light! It wasn't a tale! It was true!

"I'm coming, Lionstripe!" she said, padding through the woods. These woods were thicker and alive, not dead and scrawny.

The light continued to move as she walked towards it, and she knew a whirlpool had to be nearby. She only hoped it had not frozen over in the cold season of leaf-bare.

She continued following the light, her footsteps lightly touching the soft snow. With each step she took, she knew she was a step closer to home, a step closer to her family, a step closer to the ones she loved.

"Kits, we're going home," she whispered, continuing to follow the light. The storm began to slow down now, only soft snowflakes following. The light continued to shine, and she continued to follow. She would have to thank StarClan for this wonderful miracle.

She began to yawn, tired. She knew she had to keep walking. If she stopped, she might be found before she had a chance to return home.

She continued walking, wondering how much longer it would be before she found the whirlpool that would take her home to FoxClan, the whirlpool that would lead her back to her life.

She wondered what would happen when the WeedClan cats found out she was missing. Would they come after her? Would they follow her? What if they were following her right now and she had no idea?

"Snowfeather," a voice boomed. It wasn't a large, terrifying voice, but a soft, gentle one. Snowfeather recognized it as her mother's voice.

"Mother?" she asked, gazing around the snowy forest. Her mother was nowhere to be found though.

Snowfeather continued to follow the light, beginning to chase it now. "MOTHER?! MOTHER?!" she asked, continuing to run. She ran faster and faster, faster than she had ever run before. It was like running from Wavekit all over again, except this time, she was running towards something, not away from something.

"Mother?!" she called again. Suddenly, she tripped over a stone, landing face first in the snow. She groaned, slowly rising to her feet. She took a step forward, but the light did not move. Instead, it began to shine and glow over a pool.

"The whirlpool!" Snowfeather gasped, padding towards the pool. Water and light shined brightly, and Snowfeather knew this whirlpool would get her home.

She looked up, seeing a figure walk by. As it came closer, she recognized the figure as her mother. Her mother smiled, gazing at her with those same gentle blue eyes.

"Snowfeather," she purred.

"Mother," Snowfeather said, running towards her mother. Her mother smiled as Snowfeather came close, and Snowfeather could feel the gentle rasp of her tongue along the top of her head.

"I've missed you," Snowfeather told her.

Her mother smiled. "As have I, Snowfeather. We've heard your cries and prayers Snowfeather, and your good intentions and belief in StarClan has allowed you to gain access to the whirlpool that will lead you to your destination. I must ask, do you truly want to return home?"

"Of course! I want to give birth to my kits, to go back to Lionstripe, to be with everyone again!" Snowfeather told her. Why would her mother not want her to return?

"Very well. You must listen to the directions very carefully, Snowfeather, very carefully indeed," her mother said.

"I will," Snowfeather told her.

"You must concentrate hard on where you want to go. Envision it inside your mind. You must then dip your nose into the whirlpool. From then on, you will be transported," her mother told you. "I just wanted to tell you, I'm very proud of you, Snowfeather. I never believed you'd grow into this young she-cat today."

"Thank you, Mother," Snowfeather said. "Farewell until next time we meet."

Her mother nodded slowly. Snowfeather took a step towards the portal, envisioning FoxClan in her mind. She thought of Sunstar in her den, the apprentices training in the woods, her long hunts with Lionstripe, Mistyfall's gentle face.

With these thoughts in her mind, Snowfeather dipped her nose into the water. Immediately, ripples began to swirl, and Snowfeather looked up, suddenly being lifted into the air. StarClan's light and the whirlpool water fused, and her eyes glowed a bright blue as she spun around. A blue light flashed through the woods, and Snowfeather felt energy surge through her. She then blacked out.

Chapter 46

Snowfeather groaned as she awoke on the forest floor. The entire forest seemed to spin, and her body was sore. Once her vision became focused, she looked up, seeing she was in a forest. But it wasn't just any forest...

"The FoxClan forest!" she gasped in excitement. She slowly stood up, shaking snow off her pelt. She had done it! She was home! Home at last! She didn't know where to go first. Would she go see Lionstripe? Maybe she'd head to camp.

She began to pad through the woods, looking around for Lionstripe. How she longed to see his gentle face once again. She couldn't wait to tell him the news of her kits. He'd be so thrilled once she did so.

She looked around, wondering where he was. Perhaps he was on patrol or back at camp. That's where she would head-camp. She was sure every cat was worried about her.

She continued on her way, looking around. How she had missed this forest. She hoped she would never have to leave again.

As she continued, she stopped, spotting a familiar ginger tail hanging from a tree. Lionstripe! She quickly ran to the bottom of the tree, excitement filling her.

"Lionstripe!" she shouted.

She watched as the tail stopped twitching and stood still. His green eyes suddenly gazed down onto hers, and his eyes widened. He rushed down the tree, excited.

"Snowfeather! You're alright! What happened? I've been so worried," he told her, nuzzling her.

"Oh, Lionstripe, I've missed you so much. Come on, we'll

talk in the tree," she said, beginning to climb up the thin branches. Once they were on the branches, she began to explain.

"I was trapped by a clan called WeedClan. They were insane, thinking I was their leader, and I possessed great powers," Snowfeather explained.

"But you do possess great powers," Lionstripe pointed out.

Normally, Snowfeather would laugh and smile at this, but she didn't. "No, not like that. They thought I had the power to revive an entire forest and turn a dying forest into a striving forest."

"What insane cats," Lionstripe said.

"They all possessed powers, Lionstripe. My 'deputy', Rabbitfur, has powers too, and he shot me in the side with his. It's still a bit sore."

"How did you escape?" Lionstripe asked.

"With my clever skills," Snowfeather joked.

Lionstripe laughed. "Oh, Snowfeather, I've missed you so much. Please don't ever leave again."

"I won't, I promise," she told him. "I love you," she purred.

"I love you too," he told her.

"By the way," she said, looking down at her paws. "There's something I've been meaning to tell you."

"Oh, yeah? What's that?" he asked.

Snowfeather opened her mouth to speak, only to be cut off by a shriek. "SNOWSTAR! SNOWSTAR, WHERE ARE YOU?!"

Snowfeather froze, gazing at Lionstripe in fear.

"I thought you said you escaped," Lionstripe whispered.

How did they find me? Snowfeather thought. "I'll be right

back," she whispered. She looked over, seeing Rabbitfur pad by. "That's Rabbitfur," she whispered, easing down the tree. She landed next to him, and he froze.

"Snowstar, where have you been?! One moment you were in WeedClan, and now you're in a new forest!"

"How did you find me?" Snowfeather asked.

"You sound mouse-brained, Snowstar. We have cats with *powers,* remember? They can certainly track down cats. Now, why have you come here? How did you come here?"

"My great powers, of course," Snowfeather said. "How did *you* come here?"

"Other cats' powers," he told her. "Thank StarClan we found you. Come on, back to WeedClan. Maybe you can explain this on the way."

"No," Snowfeather said.

Rabbitfur froze. "What did you just say?"

"I mean, before we go, I'd like you to meet someone," she said, looking at the tree. "Lionstripe," she said.

She watched as the tom slowly came down the tree, standing beside her. She watched as he gazed at Rabbitfur with hatred, and Snowfeather did the same. "This is Lionstripe...my mate."

Rabbitfur's eyes widened. "TRAITOR! YOU'RE A TRAITOR TO WEEDCLAN!" he yowled. "YOU HAVE A MATE! YOU...YOU'RE A TRAITOR!"

"I always have been," Snowfeather hissed at him.

"What do you mean?" Rabbitfur asked.

"This is my clan, this is my mate. I never enjoyed WeedClan! I've been plotting my escape since I arrived! I have no

nature powers, only a power that turns me into mist!" she spat.

She watched as Rabbitfur unsheathed his claws. "What a traitor! For moons we've awaited a leader, and the only one we got was a traitor! I'm sure StarClan won't mind if we sacrifice you since you betrayed us all."

She froze as Lionstripe stepped forward, growling. He unsheathed his claws, hissing, "Over my dead body."

"That should be easy then," Rabbitfur laughed maliciously. "WEEDCLAN WARRIORS, COME UPON ME!" he spat.

Snowfeather watched in fear as WeedClan warriors lined the hills, all gazing at Lionstripe and Snowfeather.

"Maybe we'll have two to sacrifice instead of one," he laughed.

"You are not worthy to worship StarClan!" Snowfeather spat. "The Dark Forest is the only place you'll go!"

Snowfeather gasped as cats grabbed her. Rabbitfur ignored her altogether, beginning to motion cats to hold her down.

"Lionstripe!" she screeched at the top of her lungs. Cats held her down, using powers to have vines grow over her body so she could not move a muscle.

"This should be fun," Rabbitfur said, stepping near Snowfeather. He leaned over her, his breath reeking of blood. Snowfeather turned, seeing Lionstripe being held back by cats. Was this the end?

Snowfeather gulped, awaiting death, knowing it would come. Rabbitfur raised his claws, about to strike her throat. She shut her eyes tight. "I love you, Lionstripe," she whispered.

Suddenly, Rabbitfur was pushed out of the way by Lionstripe. Lionstripe's claws striked the vines, letting her go.

"No, you fool!" Rabbitfur spat, zapping Snowfeather. He

continued to do so until Lionstripe pushed him away.

Snowfeather fell to the ground, panting heavily. She did not normally feel this much pain after being zapped. Blood began to circle around her, and she let out a harsh cry. She looked, seeing Rosepaw watch with fear.

"GO! GET MISTYFALL! GET HELP!" Snowfeather screeched. She suddenly knew what was going on. As if the pain of the zapping were not enough, she was giving birth...too early.

"Snowfeather! Hold on!" Lionstripe hissed. Snowfeather weakly watched as Rabbitfur pinned Lionstripe down, only for Lionstripe to push the tom back. He ran quickly around the tom, striking him.

"I have powers too," Lionstripe growled. He pushed Rabbitfur down, hissing and growling. As the two fought, Snowfeather suddenly noticed Mistyfall and others come by. Cats began to join into the fight, and Snowfeather gasped in pain as Mistyfall ran towards her.

Suddenly, Snowfeather saw Rabbitfur tracing his claw over Lionstripe's throat. "After I kill you," Rabbitfur whispered, "your mate will be next."

"NO!" Lionstripe hissed, pushing the tom off. He pushed Rabbitfur to the ground, and without any hesitation, he stuck his claws into the tom's throat.

Snowfeather watched as Rabbitfur became limp and lifeless, and the WeedClan warriors stood in awe, disappearing moments later at the death of their leader.

"Snowfeather!" Lionstripe breathed, running to her. He looked to Mistyfall. "What's happening to her?!"

"Her kits aren't due for half a moon and they're being born now!" Mistyfall explained.

"Kits?! What are you talking about?!" Lionstripe asked. Though the question was meant for Mistyfall, he only gazed into

Snowfeather's eyes.

"I tried to tell you, but I was captured, and then...Rabbitfur came back," she breathed, gasping in pain.

"The first kit is coming!" Mistyfall gasped.

Snowfeather cried in pain as the first tiny bundle of fur slid out. It was a ginger tom, just like Lionstripe. Lionstripe pushed the kit towards Snowfeather in fear, awaiting for more kits to be born.

"I believe two more," Mistyfall said. Snowfeather had never been in so much pain. Was this what a regular kit birth was like?

She saw sadness in Mistyfall's eyes, and Snowfeather did not know why. Were the kits going to die? She did not want them to die...She didn't want anyone to die.

Her thoughts faded as she let out another cry. This time, a light ginger she-cat was born, and Lionstripe pushed the kitten next to her brother.

"One more," Mistyfall told her, worry in her eyes.

Snowfeather groaned, letting out a cry as the last kit was born. It was a white she-cat, just like Snowfeather. Lionstripe quickly pushed the she-cat next to her brother and sister.

Though the kits were born, Snowfeather was still in eternal pain. She looked at Mistyfall who looked at her in fear.

"We should name them," Snowfeather rasped.

Lionstripe nodded. "The tom, what will the tom be called?"

Snowfeather thought for a moment, wincing in pain. "Pumpkinkit," she whispered. "His name will be Pumpkinkit."

More pain surged through her, and everything was beginning to make sense. The worry in Mistyfall's eyes, her mother's words.

"The white kitten will be Frostedkit," she told Lionstripe.

Lionstripe nodded, looking at the ginger she-cat. "And the she-cat? What will she be called?"

"You name her," Snowfeather told him, knowing she did not have much time left.

"Lightkit," he whispered.

"Such lovely names," Snowfeather purred, more pain spreading through her. "Lionstripe, you must promise me you'll love and cherish these kits and take good care of them."

"Of course, won't you?"

Snowfeather shook her head. "It's all clear now. I'm dying, Lionstripe, and I won't survive. You have to raise these kits on your own, these three small kits. Please, make sure they survive," she begged.

Lionstripe looked at her in shock, then looked at Mistyfall. "Is this true?! Can't you cure her?!"

"There is nothing else I can do," Mistyfall told him with a sad gleam in her eyes.

"Snowfeather, please don't leave me, I love you," Lionstripe begged.

"I love you too, and now, you must love these kits as much as you love me. Let my love encourage you," she whispered.

Sound began to fade, and she looked at her kits one last time. Lionstripe's constant shouting was lost, and all she did was look into his emerald eyes before everything faded away, and she was trapped in darkness.

Epilogue

Snowfeather remembered entering into StarClan. It was peace, happiness, everything cheerful, only for a few moments. She then remembered how she had left Lionstripe with her three kits who now had lost a mother.

She remembered her mother looking at her with sad eyes, welcoming her to the land of eternal peace. For Snowfeather, it was not eternal peace, but eternal sadness and torture. How she hated seeing Lionstripe wail, how she hated seeing him cry as she was buried in the FoxClan camp, how she hated to see him look at his three kits and cry.

Snowfeather had to be proud of him though. She remembered watching him take the small kits into the nursery. Mistyfall had told them there was a rare chance they would survive, but with the help of the nursery queens, Pumpkinkit, Lightkit, and Frostedkit survived.

For moons, Snowfeather watched her kits. The sadness soon faded, and she smiled as Lionstripe would play with the kits. She would sometimes visit the kits in their dreams, hoping to comfort them. They struggled not having a mother...

She remembered being so proud seeing them stand on that rock with Sunstar. They became apprentices, training to be FoxClan warriors. Snowfeather couldn't be any happier for her kits.

It seemed nothing could destroy their lives now. Their father loved them, they were becoming apprentices, and some were even falling in love. But then, everything turned for the worst.

Twolegs invaded FoxClan's territory, and one by one, each family member joined her in StarClan. Lionstripe, Pumpkinpaw, Lightpaw, and Frostedpaw. The ones she loved, her kin, never to live on. It broke her heart in a million pieces.

By now, she understood StarClan's entire prophecy. She was free from Moonstar's grasp, but she would live a life of sadness. For some reason, Snowfeather thought that being in MoonClan seemed better than all the despair she'd been through.

From time to time, she would think of Bear, the tom who had betrayed her. She would visit Silverwhisker and Stonecloud, her proud mentors. She would see her brother who had miraculously changed from his malicious self before. She would make up the lost time with her gentle mother.

But most of all, she spent time with Lionstripe and her kits, for they lived peacefully together in StarClan. After moons in StarClan, Snowfeather was finally able to agree on one thing...life in StarClan was better than life on Earth, love seemed to make all anger and despair fade away, and those who were abandoned were always found again...

THE END

Author's Note

Dear Reader,

I want to thank you for following along Snowfeather's incredible journey, no matter what year you began reading this. This novel was written in 2012-2013 and grew massively successful, so I thank you for its continued success years later. This is now one of my most popular novels on Wattpad with over 100k views.

I apologize if this journey also led to heartbreak. I always feel a little guilty when I see a new user comment on Chapter 1 and go "So excited! Can't wait to see what happens" while I'm casually muttering, "Honey, you got a big storm coming."

I find it strange that this book began as a random idea that popped into my mind in my early middle school days. I remember having one big Warriors Cats fanfic brainstorm session and threw this in as a half-formed idea that might be fun to write. While many of my fics are heavily based off role-playing, this one actually originated from very little role-play. This novel in its entirety is based off a three month role-play that began when Snowfeather first joined MoonClan while everything else was pure creativity to fill in the gaps.

I want to formally apologize for killing off the kits! It was never meant for Pumpkinpaw, Frostedpaw, and Lightpaw to die in the end. They were supposed to be warriors and continue to grow Snowfeather and Lionstripe's family. Unfortunately, the user who owned FoxClan ended the clan, and when I tried to continue it, I received a large lecture from her, and because of copyright issues, I was forced to let it go. So, they are canonically dead unfortunately.

I'm please with how this novel has turned out, even if my 2013 writing style is a little outdated now. I enjoyed writing this book though, and am shocked how many of you enjoy it despite its depressing themes. The official Wattpad Fanfiction account even added it to one of their Reading Lists. That is the ultimate

compliment to a writer!

No sequel! I get this question a lot, and sorry, it's not happening.

I also want to update this and let you know that **I do not write Warriors Cats fanfic anymore**. Thanks to those who supported me over the years from 2012 onward. You helped me gain traction on Wattpad, and I thank you for that. My Warriors fanfics are still up for those who want to read more Warriors fics beyond this novel, but please know I will not be writing any more Warriors novels, so please refrain from posting any comments of that nature.

If you are interested in reading some more recent works of mine, I've recently been taking to writing queer fiction and have unexpectedly been doing pretty well in that genre, so I recommend those novels as well.

Thank you, everyone :)

~Maeve